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ABSTRACT

In order to examine the phenomenon of gangs among Chinese youths in New York, interviews were conducted with members of the Chinatown community and with persons working in this community. In this document the texts of the author's discussions with eight individuals are presented. A social worker who works with delinquent Chinese youth and a former gang member now working in an outreach project characterize gang members and their motivations, and describe gang activities. A young Chinese man, not a member of a street gang, talks about life in Chinatown. Two policemen and a Chinatown civic leader also discuss gang related problems. In addition, information obtained in an interview with two "hard core" gang members, and the author's assessment of their comments, are presented. Changes in the character of Chinese youth gangs over the years are evident through these interviews. Some immigration figures, as well as arrest statistics, are offered to help illustrate these changes. Recommendations for remedying the youth gang problem are addressed to government, community and school officials, and to the youths and their parents. (GC)

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Gangs in New York's Chinatown

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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FOREWORD

In doing our research for a study on Chinese immigrant children, we were continually astounded at the extent of fear in the lives of New York's Chinatown residents. The parents escorted even their teenage children to school. In home visits, we saw rickety doors with three or four locks on them. As one occupant wryly commented, "I feel as if I step into a self-made jail every time I come home to my room. Look at the bars across my windows. I have two locks on my door. In spite of these security measures, burglars took my door off the hinges and made off with my television set."

Even in the newly constructed high-rise apartments, muggings and robberies take place in the elevators and laundry rooms. Weary workers used to find relaxation and entertainment in the movie houses. Now unless one is stout of heart, one is reluctant to go to the movies, which have been the scene of many a shoot-out. Wedding banquets and joyous occasions in the restaurants have sometimes turned to misfortune when the guests, laden with their jewelry and finery, become targets for young robbers. The streets are now the "turf" of four to five gangs who extort from the merchants and businesses on a regular pay-off basis. Restaurants are forced to provide free food to gang members under the threat of trouble in the form of broken windows, bad publicity from a gang shoot-out, or bodily harm to the owner or his family.

Indiscriminate gun play by rival gangs have killed a number of by-standers caught in the cross-fire of bullets, even in broad daylight. Parents forbid their children to go out and play. Even grown-ups hurry home to their "self-made jails," and few families can say that they have not been touched by crime at least once, if not many times.

Worst of all, however, is the environment and pressure that teenage boys live under. They may be beaten up on their way to school, in school, or if they venture out to play. They are threatened or coerced into joining gangs against their will. The dilemma that they face is an unbearable burden for thirteen to eighteen year olds to deal with. If they don't join the gangs, sometimes for self-protection, they live in constant fear of being beaten up. If they do join the gangs, they inevitably ruin their lives by slackening off in school, running with

the pack, learning to like the excitement and cameraderie of gang life, and going into a life of crime. Teenage boys should not have to face such a dilemma. Yet, in our talks with many young boys, the dilemma was a daily fact of life.

To look at the gang scene, I sought out a number of knowledgeable people to seek their viewpoints and recommendations. Some of these interviews were taped and reproduced here. For example, one is with a social worker who works with pre-delinquent youths. One is with a former gang member turned street worker. The police gave their version of the situation. A Chinatown civic leader offered his viewpoints. Two hard-core gang members agreed to be interviewed but not to be taped. The stance of the Chinese language press was expressed in five China Post editorials, which are reproduced. The chronological bibliography tells its own story. The figures in the tables reveal the spectacular rise in the crime rate. But the cry of anguish and despair comes through most cogently and emotionally in Henry Chang's poem, "Streetdude."

I tried not to paraphrase but to present the words as they were spoken and as they poured out of the hearts and souls of the people touched by the intolerable situation. I hope their words do not fall on deaf ears.

SOCIAL WORKER

WILSON LOO

Every day, this young man, Wilson Loo, risks his life working with pre-delinquents and potential delinquents in Chinatown. His mission is to keep them out of the gangs. Such intentions thwart the recruiting efforts of the gangs and do not please them very much. Yet they respect him and even turn to him when they are in trouble. Wilson Loo is (B); (C) is another interviewee.

A I am talking to a social worker who has been down in Chinatown and has a great deal of experience working with the young people in Chinatown. Today he is going to tell us a little bit about some of the problem youth that he has encountered, but first I'd like him to give us a little bit of background about his own qualifications in this respect.

B I have been working in the community for a considerable period of time. I have been working primarily with "problem" children - problem in the educational sense. We try to deal with these problems through workshops, rap sessions, and sports programs. This affords me the opportunity to establish rapport and gain insight into their problems.

A You were born in New York City, right in New York's Chinatown?

B Correct.

A You have grown up here all your life so that you know the situation, you know the children, and you know the community. Why did you feel that this is something that you would like to go into? Why are you in this type of social work?

B Just a few years back I was in the same shoes as many of the youngsters that I'm working with now. I can look back reflectively and put myself in the "good" shoe. I want to share my experiences

and be in a position to guide and offer certain opportunites to the youngsters I'm working with. I believe that experiences are a very important factor in this kind or work. Just being in that position is a lot of personal hardship and a lot of headaches at times, but it has been a very rewarding field and I'll be in this field for the immediate future.

A Now you yourself are interested in writing about the gangs which have been quite a problem for the Chinese community in New York. Can you pick out one or two gang members and give us a description of them. Why are they in a gang? What are their ages? What is their school background? What is their immigration background and so forth?

B I prefer not to identify the individuals but an average gang member would have been an immigrant of the mid 1960s. The family is not poor, in fact, they're doing comparatively well with respect to the median income averages in Chinatown. His (the gang member's) educational criteria lasts up to about ninth or tenth grade and then he left school. He joined primarily because of his peers and to "run" around and do things collectively. They're very conscious of group activities because in numbers, there is strength.

A You say these children come from families who are not poor, rather well-off. That's a very interesting point. Could you elaborate on that? Well-off in what respect?

B The classical, traditional belief is that most youngsters join because of need, of not having certain things, of being deprived and so on. But from what I understand, that is not the standard criteria for joining. There are youth in the street gangs whose parents are not hurting financially. Well-off in regards to other Chinese American households but this may be deceiving because oftentimes more than one member work in the household. It is definitely not a matter of life and death. That is not to say that the majority do not join street gangs because of economics. On the contrary, perhaps the majority of gang members are "ghetto-bound" Chinatown based youngsters.

A In other words, the gangs are not necessarily from this vicinity, not from the Chinatown area?

B Not necessarily.

A What percentage would you say are from outside of Chinatown?

B I guess that would depend upon what group we are talking about but it would seem to me that the phenomenon of the seventies has been the creation of youth gangs outside the physical boundaries of

the Chinatown vicinity.

A But they come to Chinatown for their activities.

B Chinatown is the power source. They compete for the privilege of protecting the gambling houses. This is what the warring has been over for the past few years - who gets to be the number one gang in Chinatown. The number one gang gets a weekly stipend for each of their members. They are fighting for the right to receive a weekly paycheck from the associations.

A Is that their principal activity?

B According to major sociologists, the classical theories on youth gangs have been presently motivated, to "hang out". They are not in it for the money, which would be future-motivated to a degree. There is no sense of direction. There is physical limitations to a certain area or "territory". But Chinatown street gangs have violated all of the so-called traditional norms. They are there for a specific goal and purpose - money and prestige. Contrary to traditional street gangs whom did not have sophisticated weapons - the Chinatown street gangs are very well armed indeed. Financial support is readily available for the purchase of weapons or supplies.

A Yet they have no need for money, you say.

B The main driving force behind street gangs is an economic exchange. Whether it is extortion, gambling-house pay-offs and so on. Even if they don't "need" it, that's the situation. There is no mystique or sinister blood oaths about the street gangs. It is mainly an economic system.

A You mean, the manifestation of their activities is economic? In other words, they'll mug and they'll extort for money but actually they don't need the money?

B I don't know. Everybody needs money and they see it as a means of obtaining money.

A Somehow this doesn't correlate with the fact that the families are well off already and actually money is not the crucial issue.

B It is not the crucial issue but that is the driving force behind the gangs. Many of them could conceivably go back to school or live with their parents and be comfortably well off but they would rather go out and do it by themselves.

A Can you explain that? Can you explain why they do that? Since they are not in economic need, and all they are looking for more or

less is power.

B Money is power, there's no doubt about that. It's hard to explain. The macho image has a lot to do with it. The martial arts and the street image are very important to their "face". When they war, if you really look at it objectively, most of the youth in the gangs have identical backgrounds but they see each other as competitors.

A Among themselves or society?

B Not against society. They are very much into American values with the big cars and the houses and the big money. They see money as power and if they see someone that is threatening them for their means of obtaining power, they have to eliminate them.

A Do these gang members have those symbols of cars?

B Oh yes, very much so. Perhaps the primary reason for obtaining money is to get a nice flashy car.

A And what are the other things? Clothes?

B Clothes.

A A hi-fi?

B Not so much into hi-fi. It is not uncommon for several people to share an apartment and a hi-fi would be a little more tied down. A car and clothes and to have a good time and travel is part of the main goal.

A What age are these gang members?

B It's getting increasingly younger. I would estimate between 13 and 25 with the leadership hierarchy as you get older. But the younger ones have the most to gain by obtaining a reputation. These are the ones that have the most to gain so they take the most risks. They also realize the nature of the American criminal justice system which is if a young man of 13 or 14 carries a gun and he shoots someone, the chances of his going to jail are very slim. Due to the peculiar nature of American law, he'll probably go down to court and get processed as a juvenile under Family Court. He isn't even getting punished for the crime. He is sent there merely for observation. They know this -- that when they reach the legal age, all records are destroyed. So they are "protected" and they feel nice and secure.

A Are all of these gang members more or less out of school?

B Generally, yes. School to them is a very frustrating experience especially if you are a recent immigrant and your command of the English language leaves to be desired. They feel frustrated and it is very much easier to stay with the guys and ignore school. Perhaps, generally speaking, the only contacts they would have at school is to recruit new members into their ranks; to intimidate, to extort, to recruit, to impress upon their former peers the progress they have made.

A And being in the gang, to them, is their symbol of success?

B Recruitment still remains a very crucial element of the gang. If their ranks are depleted from the wars, from the law or just from general diminishing of the ranks, they have to recruit and some people are just not willing to join. They will force these recruits to join and put them into a position where they cannot leave. For example, they will hang around a neighborhood school yard and when they see a likely prospect, they will walk up to him and say "Join our gang or we'll kill you." Of course, the young man doesn't have many resources to turn to. He can go to the school authorities but how long will they protect him? As a result, he is forced to join. Once he has joined, to gain respect amongst his new peers, he has to outdo and outperform until he is in a position where he can no longer afford to leave.

A How many are depleted from gangs? You just mentioned that the law is very lenient towards gang members because of the juvenile aspect of the law. How many do get sent up?

B There is no doubt to the street gangs about the American criminal justice system - they regard it as a revolving door. According to the Department of Corrections, there are an average of 4 to 5 Chinese Americans in each prison. Altogether, there are no more than two or three dozen incarcerated at any one time scattered throughout the penal system.

A Where was this?

B The prisons include Rikers Island, Auburn, Elmira, Clinton, Attica and it is interesting to note that the first gang related murder conviction was recently obtained against a gang member. He received a fifteen year to life sentence.

A How old was he?

B Twenty.

A What you are telling me now is that under the law youths under 18 get off relatively scot-free?

B Under the age of 16, they are not subject to regular prosectuion but rather taken to Family Court whereby they are pretty much processed through the revolving door concept.

A They don't get any punishment at all?

B Under juvenile law when a youngster commits a crime, he is not charged with that crime. They keep records but he is not charged with that crime. If they put him away, they put him away for observation as a P.I.N.S. (Person in need of supervision). When he reaches legal age, those records are supposed to be destroyed. After the age of legality, he is tried as an adult. If he is tried as an adult, he knows the pecularity of the plea bargaining system. They know they can walk in and get a slap on the wrist for a first offense. Even after multi-offenses, they know the worse they can get is a few months.

A You mentioned that some young men do not want to join but are coerced into joining. Have you encountered anybody coming to talk to you and saying "I don't want to join but these guys are after me?"

B Just recently, a similar incident occured in a neighborhood whereby two young men with very good grades, athletic, perhaps a little large for their age were coerced into joining. The appropriate school officials contacted me and we arranged a rendezvous with the people. They were very, very paranoid. They didn't want anything to do with the gang. They stopped going to school because some of the gang members were waiting for them and at the same time their grades were suffering. So what were we to do? Their parents wanted to send them to Arizona and California to complete their schooling out there. We were faced with a little difficulty. What finally happened was that a co-worker and I escorted them to school for a few weeks until the gangs could see that we were standing by them. Gradually, the pressure was diverted to some other unfortunate students.

A That's very interesting. There are two things I would like to go into further. One is--then you do have some influence with the existing gangs so that they respect you?

B I don't know so much about respect. Respect is a hard thing to acknowledge especially if they are in an environment where the thing is to put down, to threaten people. Perhaps they can see our value in a situation where they got arrested or some other difficulty and we can contribute to the ultimate outcome of that particular case. It is advantageous to have us around in a "wartime" situation because we can save "face" for them without them losing respect. They can maintain a constant state of war and not actually go to war.

A Have they ever threatened your organization or you?

B Oh, several times. I think that comes with the job. You're in a peculiar position. You can't tell them to stop and yet you have to abide by the rules and regulations of your organization. The laws of confidentiality between a doctor and his patient or a lawyer and his client do not apply between a social worker and his client. Yet it is necessary for trust to be a two-way street if one is to establish rapport. If a person tells you of some illegal activity, you are bound by the law to report it to the police. But it is a very rare thing for a social worker to be called in to testify against a person. Still it is a legal complication and it is evident in our position. The police are cooperative because they realize the difficulty of our position. Bluntly, we are caught in the middle and used by all sides but we're here to stay so they let us exist.

A Now the other aspect is that you said the parents wanted to send the children away. In this case, the parents were very,very concerned and the children could turn to their parents for guidance and a solution. Do you find that this is true of the other gang members?

B Respect for the parents remains a decreasing phenomenon as we assimilate into American society. I feel that respect for the parents is on a downward trend with the majority of youth gangs. They will turn to their parents if they need money for bail or if they need a place to stay. The students I was working with were very close to their parents and their parents were very concerned. They had a very good family relationship. That was the main factor behind the person excelling in school. On the other hand, if a gang member felt compelled to call upon his parents for help, it would be only as a last ditch situation. He ran out of everything else from his connections and his friends - only then will he turn to his parents.

A Would you say that as a rule, gang members are intelligent?

B In what sense? They are very clever and certainly not naive. They learned the name of the game and try to play by the rules and come out winnning which is what everybody does in their own way. They recognize the goals and they're using different means to achieve these same goals. They recognize everything American culture is for and they like it. It is just that they disagree with the means of obtaining it. They like the cars, the big money and the ego tripping. They don't agree with going to school and working hard as the means. They see short cut methods which are sometimes necessitated by their position in life. If it's a ghetto person, the means of obtaining schooling may be shut off and he justifies his behavior by saying what else can he do. "I can either wash dishes or work in the restaurant. Well, to hell with that, I'm going to take the easy way out."

A Is he pleased with himself? What is his own attitude towards

himself being a member of a gang?

B In Chinese-American society there has been a depleted warrior caste. They see themselves as the new warrior class. When they stay in the streets and constantly pace up and down, they feel very head-strong. They feel very powerful. They know people fear them because of the terror of weapons. They know that people stay out of their way and try not to antagonize them. When this is compounded with the martial arts movies and the very nature of Chinese society which respects the warrior caste, they just naturally see themselves as the new warriors in Chinatown.

A In other words, they are pleased with themselves.

B At least superficially.

A For example, a bank robber is not pleased with what he is doing but he does it as a means to an end. Do you think that this is analagous to a gang member?

B My personal feelings with youth gangs is that, perhaps less so now than in the sixties, when a young man grows up in Chinatown, he is very conscious of youth gangs. The gangs make the daily headlines. If you're not a jock, you're in a gang. If you're not in a gang, you'd better be protected.

A What is a jock?

B An athlete--a person who's into basketball, football, etc. Either you're in a gang or you play basketball. Even if you just went to school, you better have your friends to back you up if the gangs pick on you. If they pull guns on you, you have to have your own gun to protect yourself. Everybody's very conscious of this. The gangs of the sixties were dissolved not by the police, not by the community but rather they just settled down, married and had kids.

A That's a very good aspect. What about the rise and fall of gangs? Is there some kind of pattern?

B Personally, I feel that just about every street person in Chinatown goes through a gang stage, if not directly, indirectly he is affected by it. Gradually they grow out of it. A very small percentage remains hard core. After a series of years most get married, have kids and try to forget about the past.

A About what age do they move out?

B Usually in the early to middle twenties. The ones that do stay "hard-core" find themselves the leaders because the others have left

and they are the leaders over the upcoming generation.

A Let's go back to the activities of the gangs. You say they guard the gambling houses. Were it not for gambling houses would they have other means of support that would keep them going?

B Perhaps that can be answered by the current events now occurring in Chinatown. Twelve months ago a large percentage of youngsters identified with a major San Francisco gang started coming to New York. The already established gang structure had several brief but bloody skirmishes with the challengers. The information available is that they left the San Francisco area because the money was not coming in. They felt it necessary to find fresh territory in New York.

A From the gambling establishments?

B Correct.

A That is their main activity--fighting for control over the gambling establishment and protecting it?

B That is the peak of their success. The number one gang gets the money. That is what the gangs are fighting over.

A Do you have any idea how the tongs or gambling establishments maintain these gangs? How do they pay them or know to pay one gang over another?

B From the information that is common knowledge, it is apparent that they have middlemen that maintain contact with each organized group. They are in a position to determine which gang will come out number one. For many years, the Eagles were the main gang in Chinatown until they started robbing the very people they were supposed to be protecting. At this time, the Eagles were engaged in active warfare with another group. Lo and behold, one night the Eagles were told to leave because they were replaced by the other gang. The payoffs usually goes to a middleman that handles the connection. The middleman pays the gang members off and also handles the bail bonds if they get arrested. Their presence has to be known. A gang is not effective if people don't see them on the streets. Their presence has to be seen even if their lives are in jeopardy. They have to be there or they are not going to get the money.

A Can you identify these people? In other words, the law enforcement officers already know where the gambling establishments are. All they have to do is spot who is standing outside to identify which gang members are associated with which gambling establishment.

B The police know more about the gangs than all of us put together.

They are always on the streets. They have folders on each and every member. They know who is in the gang and who is not. What could they arrest them for? Loitering? If a person is on the streets, the police may know what his activities are, but that is not grounds for arrest.

A What have the police done about the gangs?

B They have a youth squad that deals primarily with the gangs. In my opinion, perhaps they would be more effective if they had a few dozen Chinese-American police officers in the community. Ironically, the first uniformed Chinese-American patrolman to walk the beat in Chinatown in more than a hundred years was just laid off because of the "budget crisis". When shootings occur, they look for the persons responsible and pick it up from there. Their informants remain very few because of the white/yellow contradiction. To be a "rat" on your own gang is perhaps the most serious of violations. Plus the rewards are not worth it and this has handicapped the police the most. In addition, there is a reluctance by witnesses to testify against a defendant because they know what can happen if they antagonize a gang. They can get you back. This has handicapped the police tremendously.

A Is the attitude now to let them be?

B Before this police captain came to this precinct, there was a police captain that played "by the book". Gambling houses were closed for six months thereby depriving youth gangs of their money because there was nothing to protect. External forces evicted him from the community. He did his job but the pressures brought on by certain community leaders compelled his departure. Presently, of course they know where the gambling houses are. Yet, it is a let-live situation, as it has been for hundreds of years.

A What about the law-abiding people in Chinatown? Are they incensed and if so, what have they done?

B In my opinion, working class people in Chinatown feel frustrated, intimidated and powerless. They see their own community representatives appeasing or acknowledging the existence of the gangs. They see gambling houses existing right in the middle of their own block. They don't have the confidence to report crimes to the police. Their attitude is, "Why should I? What good is it going to do? What respect should I have for the police? They let gambling houses exist. They allow young kids to run around the streets and shoot people. If arrests are made, what can I do? If I testify, I'll be killed. If I testify and the person gets convicted, he'll only get a few months anyway." It's a vicious cycle and it goes around and around. The general trend has been to work harder and to get out of Chinatown.

A Is that the only way out?

B I have several opinions about this situation but that has been the general feeling among most people in Chinatown.

A Do you find people really leaving Chinatown for this reason? It seems to me that Chinatown is getting bigger and bigger and growing and growing.

B The reasons why Chinatown is growing are many. The crime rate is perhaps the most daily conscious fear of many of the residents. They know wages are low so they willingly work harder. Working in a restaurant or sewing factory is no picnic but if it is the only way of doing it, they do it. But their main fear is fear of crime, getting robbed on the way home whether he's black, yellow or white. That is the most awesome daily preoccupation of their lives. It's always "Get enough money to move out to a better neighborhood" just as it has been for hundreds of years with previous immigrant groups.

A If you were a leader, suppose you were the president of the Chinese Benevolent Association, what would you do besides tell the people to move out?

B The situation in Chinatown exists because the people acknowledge it, submit to it, or try to live with it. If the people really didn't want it, the police would be the first to do all they can to get them out. The police see this as what the people want. "They want gambling houses. They want to earn some money. So leave them alone. It's not hurting anybody. If everybody wants it, we're not going to be the bad guys and create bad community relations by closing up the gambling houses and kicking out the kids." It's hard to say what I would do if I were a leader but I just have a feeling that the situation exists because the people let it exist.

A Can you tell me how many gangs there are in Chinatown today and what the membership of each is?

B You mean in the New York area? It's hard to pinpoint because exact membership remains a closely guarded secret unless you're an active gang member. There are several large gangs in the metropolitan New York area. Perhaps the main group in control now is the Ghost Shadows. There's a group that recently made several newspaper headlines with their senseless slayings in the Brooklyn-Queens area called the Flying Dragons. Another group that left Chinatown and is presently trying to make a comeback is called the Black Eagles. Then there are various association-sponsored youth groups that feel compelled to take retaliatory positions if they are attacked. It just goes on and on. Just about every small group of young men now is either on the outskirts of a gang or allied with another gang. You may not have a friend in the gang but your friend's friend's friend may be in a gang

and if he's attacked, you should stand by him. So gang size may jump into the hundreds. Hard core membership is about several dozen in each group.

A Do you have any idea where they get weapons?

B Weapons are constantly available in the New York area despite the most stringent gun control laws in the entire world. They are supplied by middle men usually of other ethnic groups. Guns are also available from other states where gun control is not so strict. Guns are generally available.

A What kind of guns do they use?

B They usually use relatively simple and concealable weapons. They carry primarily defensive weapons; small hand guns, Saturday night specials, small automatics. Those that are not so readily seen. Perhaps a few rifles and shotguns.

A Are knives anymore in vogue?

B Knives, sticks and pipes were the weapons of the sixties. Only a very small percentage carried hand guns. Now, people in the seventies are more conscious of firepower, just about everybody has a few guns. A good example would be the recent shooting in a Chinatown restaurant. They opened fire on the entire restaurant with two hand guns.

A Tell me about the incident.

B What apparently happened was that members of a rival gang saw opponents eating in the restaurant. They didn't even step fully into the restaurant but rather opened fire after they opened the outside door. They killed one innocent bystander, from what I read, and wounded several other innocent people.

A Are you familiar with any of the fellows that did this or the ones who were in the restaurant?

B No, I'm not.

A You mean, if one gang member meets another one, and suppose they are trapped in a restaurant and they can't run out, they would just go up there senselessly and say "We gotta shoot you down" or does there have to be a blood debt somewhere?

B Well, the blood debt is still the thing in youth gangs. "If you shoot my friend, I have to shoot you" and it could go on and on. They

saw this as an ideal opportunity. If you looked at it objectively, you would say, "Why didn't they wait until they came out?" But they saw it as the ideal time and of course, it's very much a peer-pressure thing. It's another step up the notch. "Wow, you walked into the restaurant and you shot him." Of course, they may have hit a couple of innocent bystanders along the way but that's besides the point. My advice to all the people in Chinatown is that if there is a shoot-out, the best thing you can do is lie on the ground and wait until it's over. The average shootout is very brief and your chances are better if you're on the ground instead of running away.

A In protecting the gambling houses, what they are protecting them against, the police?

B Incorrect. If the police raid a gambling house, the gang is not going to be able to protect it from the police. The worst thing one can do is shoot the police because then the anger of all the other police officers will be aroused. They realize they are existing only because the police allow them to exist.

A So what are they protecting the gambling houses from?

B From other youth gangs. If a gang goes down there and pull out guns and say "Give us the money" they're not going to argue with them. If someone wins a lot of money, they have to make sure that he doesn't get robbed. If he wins five or six thousand dollars and is robbed even before he leaves the place, it is going to be bad for the gambling house reputation.

A So they provide escort service.

B Yes, that was why the other gang was forced to leave Chinatown. They were robbing the very people they were supposed to be protecting.

A When you say leave town, where do they go?

B When I say leave town I mean outside the physical boundaries of Chinatown.

A Do they have any connections with other groups outside of the Chinatown boundary?

B That has not been the trend. The very nature of Chinese youth gangs has been very "in-house," to stay with their own kind.

A They only prey on their own community?

B Correct.

A They've never gone outside to other groups?

B It has rarely happened where they have attacked or had any interaction with other minority groups or outside elements.

A Can you give us a profile and background of one of the gang members. For instance, the man you said is up in jail now. You say he is about twenty. Can you trace his life for us a little bit. When did he come to the United States? Where did he leave? Was he a school dropout? What was his makeup that turned him to a life of crime? What is he up for anyway? Murder?

B Perhaps C can tell us about it.

C I know about the case mainly from the newspapers. If you want to know about the person's background, it's almost impossible for me to say because I haven't traced or known the person long enough to know where he came from, how long he has been here or what his activity was before.

A What are the things you do know about this case?

C The shooting was in the newspapers several months ago. It was a shootout at the outskirts of Chinatown. It was a shootout in a phone booth. This case has a lot of complications. I would say more if I knew the person well enough, but to make a comment about him when I don't know the person is very difficult. At this point, I have left the project for more than a year now. And even during the time that I was with the project, I did not deal with gangs. I might have dealt with peripheral gangs but not with hard core members. To my knowledge, I don't think there's any organization that deals with hard core gang members at this time and stage in the Chinatown area.

B Aren't some beginning to deal with the hard core?

C To my knowledge, there's nobody out there working with them that I know of or any agency working with gangs per se.

A Do you agree with what B said that the only solution is that gangs will eventually die out after the members themselves become a certain age or move away from Chinatown?

C I think yes, for any particular gang, yes. But there will always be another gang to replace it. I don't know whether it is true or not, but I always thought that most of the communities have gangs and we are one of those communities. They are not going to die out. Every ethnic group has their gangs. I can't think of any exceptions.

A What other activity do gangs engage in besides protecting gambling joints? You mentioned muggings. Is this a very serious thing? Do they really prey on the old and helpless people?

B No. If they need money, they will go into a restaurant or bar, call the owner aside and say "Give us several hundred dollars and your place will be protected." Mugging is a very low status crime. It is considered below them. If they really need money, they might go to the gambling house and gamble for it. There might be an individual or two that might rob, but the trend is that if they need money, they will go to a restaurant.

A How about robbery? Do they go to houses to rob?

B Burglaries are a constant supply of money and other things that they might need. Each gang has a few members where burglary is their primary function: to check places out, and if the gang needs things, to scout them out, to break in and take whatever they can and sell it.

A Is it a fairly common occurrence for gang members to resort to burglary?

B I would think so, yes.

A What other activities do they do?

B That is the main focus of their daily activities - to get money whether by extortion, burglary, or protection.

A Do they deal in drugs?

B The majority of members involved in gangs do not have access to the rewards that come with large volume drug dealing. Perhaps a few members in the gang might have access. They would transport drugs, but that would be the extent of it. It's available and they do it, but not on a large volume basis.

A Is drug taking a problem?

B Also a small percentage. It's existent, but if you are talking about soft drugs, everyone does that. If you are talking about hard drugs, they frown upon them because it is unreliable and could affect the makeup of the value of the member if it comes down to . . .

A So drugs are not a problem to contend with?

B It's under control.

A How about prostitution?

B Their relationship with prostitutes is not an economic one. It is quite difficult to define.

A I mean, is there any protection of prostitution houses? This was one of the main activities of the tongs in the old days.

B It has happened. Sporadically, a cat house would come into existence and they would need the protection of one of the gangs to keep it afloat. A phenomenon of the sixties that has carried over to today has been the gang rapes of prostitutes. This has not been uncommon. Recently, this has been manifested by the fact that most girls are in cathouses now and not on the streets. The kidnapping of girls that are not prostitutes has been common.

A How about the girls? Are there girl gangs?

B There are no girl gangs, but there are girls that hang out with gang members and are identified with one group or another. They are usually very young and stay in the streets.

A Are most gang members immigrants?

B That was a major criterion in the early sixties—confining membership to the foreign born. Primarily those born in Hong Kong were allowed to be members of a gang. Now in the seventies, the membership of most gangs are American-born youths but the dominant culture, is of course, Chinese. They try to speak Chinese as much as possible and subscribe to the Chinese lifestyle and culture.

A They are becoming so that there are more American-borns joining gangs who try to revert to becoming more Chinese, to being identified as being Chinese?

B It used to be that membership was restricted to the foreign born but now, it doesn't matter as long as the dominant culture is Chinese.

A Do any of them come from Taiwan or other places besides Hong Kong?

B There is one group that is involved in Chinatown that is made up of mostly Taiwanese immigrants, but they're not what you would call a youth gang. They are a little older and a group that is involved in the Chinatown area.

A But they don't do any antisocial activities?

B They do antisocial activities. It's just that I would not call them a street gang or a youth gang. I would call them a group of active participants.

A Could you call them hoodlums?

B I could define them as small-time hoodlums.

A What do they do?

B Drug dealing, hanging around gambling houses, a little extortion.

A Do these people have families with them or are they single men that are aimless and looking for a little excitement?

B Singles men looking for excitement. A large makeup of their group is comprised of the seamen that came over.

A With illegal status?

B Correct.

A So they're a group apart. Do you think that most gang members have their parents, brothers or sisters with them? Are they part of a family?

B Yes. They do have families in the New York area. It's just that once they get active they willingly separate from their family.

A I am still trying to pursue this one thing. That is, if you could take one person and describe him, somebody you know. You don't have to identify him.

B Generally speaking, there are some similarities. An average gang member's family came over in the mid-sixties. He is usually a high school dropout. He probably had some contact with youth gangs as early as the sixties. In the seventies most of his companions have moved on, married and settled down and he remained. He is the leader or high up in the hierarchy of the gang. His parents may be middle-class.

A Where do they live?

B Queens, New York. His rationale is usually that there is nothing to do. The excitement of danger is readily available. He has no goal or aim and is readily susceptible to peer pressure and thus, a likely candidate for a youth gang.

A Let's go into that track. Do you think that one of the main reasons why gangs form is because it is hard for them to find employment?

B I reject that theory because poverty is always existent. As

many members declare "poverty" or a forced existence - there are those that strive even harder and go through the traditional means of obtaining their goals through school and hard work, so I reject that theory. It's very self-justifying and rational to their own thinking but I myself do not subscribe to that.

A Do you have kids who give you a sob story when you talk to them and who say "I can't find a job and I have nothing to do so I hang out on the streets?" What do you tell them?

B They give me the song-and-dance routine and I try to make available the options and describe different means to them. The main thing when I counsel is to try never to force your own values on the. That's a hard contradiction, I know, because no matter how hard you try, some of your own values slip in. I always try to let them make their own judgment. All I can do is offer alternatives, opportunities, things they may not see and let them make the decisions.

A Are they generally receptive to your ideas or do you find gang members very hostile in attitude?

B I deal mainly with peripheral gang members. My contact with gang members stems from personal to on-the-street experience to keeping sociable. Sometimes, people come to me seeking advice and they have been very receptive and responsive.

A What would some of your suggestions in dealing with groups like that be? Do you think that these kids are looking for limits on their behavior? They'll go to the limit to see how much someone else will stop them?

B It's kind of hard to answer. It would seem that they are just like everyone else. They will do as much as they can get away with in obtaining a goal whether it is money or whatever. To most young ones who haven't even reached the peaks of their lives. I would try to offer the alternatives and allow them to see what other people see and let them make their own decision. I mean, who are we to tell them what is right and what is wrong? It's a feeling that they should have, an inborn characteristic. That is the general direction that I would use.

A Thank you for being so open and frank with us, Wilson Loo.

In a community so paralyzed by fear, it was extremely difficult to get people to talk. Many hours were spent trying to cultivate trust and confidence in the interviewer before the subject of gangs was broached, but in all too many instances, the conversation terminated abruptly as soon as the topic was raised. Even those who offered some comment would whisper as if the walls had ears.

Such terror bespeaks the extent of insecurity and the feeling of helplessness that have gripped Chinatown residents as well as all Chinese people who live in New York City. It took extraordinary courage for the young men interviewed on these pages to express their views openly and candidly, particularly since they live and work in the community. Therefore, their words, printed for all to see, is an expression of their deep concern and commitment.

GROWING UP SCARED

RICHARD LEM

The youth whom I talked to below was lucky. He did not join a gang, but he wanted me to put his comments in this booklet. As he said, many of his friends are gang members, and he does have the inside story. He respects the capability of gang power to completely destroy Chinatown, and he is troubled by it.

Childhood

"I was fortunate not to have joined a gang, but many of my friends did. I remember during the age of five or six, I was left at a baby-sitter's who sat for me until my mother came to pick me up. The average hours of contact between me and my parents were three hours per day. The lack of ACTUAL parental supervision seems to have an extremely high correlation with youth who join and those who do not."

Elementary School

"I attended P.S.__ (elementary school). At that time, the Chinese student body was about sixty percent Chinese. In P.S.___ I witnessed many occasions where the gangs beat up students for not paying extortion or protection fees. The price ranged from 25¢ to $1.00 depending upon the grade the victim was in. In those days, English as a second language or bilingual education was non-existent, but young students usually learned the language in a matter of a few years. The language barrier may or may not be a reason for the older immigrant students, who could not catch up with the language, to join gangs."

Junior High

"I attended Jr. High___ Several gangs operated in that school, the White and Black Eagles, the Quon Ying, and the Puerto Rican gang, the Road Runners. They fought and sometimes shot each other. Those were often frightening years."

Gang Activities

"In the 1970s, there was a decided difference in the organization of the gangs. The gang's power solely depended upon the sponsorship of the powerful and influential tongs. Whenever there was a killing, the tong was the first to hire lawyers and set money for bail. With their help the gangs have their supply of money, lawyers, firearms, and consenting rights to the territories. In return, the controlling gangs must protect the gambling joints from robbers and troublesome individuals who don't pay up and cause chaos. Sometimes murder and narcotics traffic are part of the deal. They pay $5,000 for a contract and traveling expenses. Being the influential source, the tongs are the least troubled from the law. The small fries are the ones who get into trouble, in this case, the youth."

Mutiny

"The youth gang activities have grown to an intensive and extremely dangerous magnitude in New York's Chinatown. These gangs are so powerful, they can destroy Chinatown in a matter of weeks. I don't mean destroying the area like in a war, but by robbing its resources to such a point where it can no longer survive. The brute facts of today are youth is no longer in rebellion, but in a condition of downright active mutiny. A terrifying change has overtaken these adolescents."

FORMER GANG MEMBER TURNED STREET WORKER

SPENCER WONG

The excitement, the activities, the thrills and the reasons for belonging to a gang are told by this young man in the following interview. Brought up in Chinatown, he fought his share of the street fights in the 1960s. Life was not easy for a young boy even when he wanted to mind his own business. Too often he was the object of brutal beatings. The only way he could protect himself was to join a gang. His own experiences made him uniquely qualified to work with pre-delinquent and delinquent youths as director of Project Reach, an outreach program in New York's Chinatown. Articulate, humorous, and intelligent, this young man offers keen insight into the gang problem.

A Do you want to tell me which gang you belonged to?

B The Continentals.

A But the Continentals are not what you would call a gang as we know them today. It was more of a social group, would you say?

B It was both. I think that all gangs are a social group. Our gang was not as violent as the gangs they have now, and they don't use the same weapons.

A What was the purpose of their forming together?

B Just to protect ourselves from the Hispanics, the Blacks, and the Italians.

A So it was an all-Chinese group against a non-Chinese group?

B Yes, but today, it is Chinese against Chinese.

A What brought about that transformation?

B In those days, there weren't too many Chinese kids around. You knew every Chinese person that walked the streets. This was before the immigration quota was lifted. This was the early 1960s and we knew everyone and we were all friends or at least nodding acquaintances. Then we had as many as 100 in the gang.

A What kind of activities did you engage in?

B Regular social activities like dances, a get-together to play cards or mah-jong all night, going to the movies, or bowling. That was the fun part of it. Then when something else happens, comes the other part of it. We try to defend, fight off, or whatever.

A What usually brought about that something else?

B Any kind of wise remark.

A You didn't go looking for trouble?

B Sometimes we did, sometimes we didn't.

A You went beyond Chinatown and said, "We're going to beat up that group over there?"

B We did that one time. We went to Erasmus Hall in Brooklyn looking for people to beat up.

A You just get the urge to beat up people?

B This is a habit made from our reactions from whatever used to happen to us. We used to be the people that got beat up all the time by the Blacks, the Hispanics, and the Italians in the school and sometimes in Chinatown with the Italians. We found ourselves having to fight a lot, and then the roles reversed and we would go looking for them.

A How did you fight?

B Every way. Mainly using our hands. We walked around with stilettos,but they were more of a scare weapon than anything else.

That was at the beginning. Then some people got knives, and some had sticks and garrison belts with huge washers that weighed four or five pounds.

A How did you put them on the belt?

B You just punched holes in the belts and use a nut and bolt and put them together.

A Were you ever hit with those things?

B Yes, yes.

A Did it hurt? Did you have to go to the hospital?

B I used to get hit a lot and it would hurt afterwards, but . . .

A It didn't last too long?

B Oh, it lasted. I had bruises all over from it. But at the time I was hit, my adrenalin was up so I didn't feel anything. But afterwards I felt it.

A When you went off to fight, how many people would join in at one time?

B Depends. At one time we had over one hundred Chinese fellows.

A This was the 1960s? Where did you get so many Chinese boys?

B There were juk-sings (native born) and juk-kaks (foreign-born). There were friends that we met from the bowling alleys. They were not all from Chinatown. Some of them were from Queens.

A Did you have a headquarters?

B We had no headquarters. We had hangouts, that is about it.

A What would be a typical hangout?

B The street. It used to be Bayard Street. Then we started hanging out in the pool room.

A What did you find in the gangs that was satisfying?

B If you had something to say, you said it without being told to shut up. It was a learning experience, it was a way of getting a social experience.

A Could you learn what you call this social aspect of life without joing a gang?

B I guess you could. I used to belong to the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts. When I was about thirteen or fourteen, I used to get beat up in school. I used to say, "What am I going to do?" I talked to those guys in the Scouts and they said, "There is nothing you can do." So I let that be that, and I continued to get beat up all the time in school. My upstairs neighbor saw me one time being beaten up in school, so he jumped in and helped me out. He said, "Listen here, you are a neighbor and you are okay. If you ever get beat up again, let me know." So I started staying with him. With his group, I always found security. Anytime anything happened, they would back me up or they would help me seek vengeance. So I said, "Hell with the other group because as far as I am concerned, they didn't help each other when they really needed to."

A Was this group another gang other than the Continentals?

B It wasn't a gang, it was just an athletic group.

A But you did other things besides stick together. Did you play ball?

B Very little.

A Did this group rob the community or do more drastic or violent things such as they are doing today?

B No. There were a couple of guys who used to go and rip something off but that wasn't a way or life for them. If they ripped something off, it would be once in a blue moon. It was more like a kick than anything else.

A You told me that when you were a kid, you had a lot of hostility. Can you tell me why you had this hostility?

B Because I used to be picked on all the time. I was a very quiet adolescent. Before thirteen, I would sit at home and

read a lot. I watched television and went out for a little while and did some athletic activity and then be home again. Then I began to get beat up in school even though I didn't go looking for a beating. That used to get to me. I would get very frustrated, because I couldn't defend myself. I didn't know how to and the odds were always against me. So when this neighbor came up to me and said, "I'll help you out whenever you need helping out," I started seeing a shift in roles.

A When you got beat up, was it at lunch time, after school, or in class?

B All those places and all those times.

A Where were the teachers?

B They were in the classrooms or in the teachers' lounges.

A You got beat up and hurt badly or were you just punched a bit in a playful manner?

B I used to be pushed, shoved, and thrown down the stairs and have six or seven guys jump on me.

A Where did you live?

B At first I lived on East Broadway (now part of Chinatown). Then I moved into Chinatown.

A Your father and mother worked?

B Yes, both of them worked. My father worked in a restaurant.

A How often did you see him?

B Just at nights. I would see him everyday but just when I was about to go to sleep.

A Did you ever tell him you were being beaten up in school?

B I told him and he went to the police. The police used to drive me to school, but as soon as I got through the school gates, it would start all over again.

A Did most Chinese kids get beaten up, or was it just you?

B Most Chinese kids at that time. This was J.H.S. 65 in the early sixties. It is not what it is now. In the early sixties, there was a ratio of 95 percent Black and Hispanic with five percent Chinese and whites.

A Your mother worked also, in the garment factory? Was she home most of the time?

B As soon as my younger sister was old enough to get to school, she went out to work.

A Were you born in this country?

B Yes.

A So you usually associated more with American borns rather than with immigrants?

B At first, but when this thing started with the gangs, I stayed with the foreign-borns because they had money from working on the weekends. They also stuck up for each other a lot more than the juk-sings. (native born)

A Do you know why?

B I don't know. They just identified with each other a lot more than the juk-sings did.

A Did the juk-sings feel as though they were part of the Chinatown scene?

B They did once in a while, but if they did they didn't make a big thing out of it. At first, I didn't make a big thing out of it; I would try to keep it a secret. But if I had a black eye, I would have to tell my parents. If it didn't show, I wouldn't say anything, but if it did I would say something.

A Do you have brothers and sisters?

B A kid brother and a kid sister.

A Did they experience the same things?

B I don't think so.

A Why is that?

B They learned from me how to stay out of trouble.

A You learned that eventually—to stay out of trouble?

B They learned from my mistakes. When I was out in the streets, my brother would be over at his friend's house in the house.

A What did you find attractive about the streets?

B To me it was exciting to walk outside and breathe in the fresh air instead of just seeing a bunch of walls.

A Do you think that the fact that your parents were never home had something to do with your feeling that you had to be out on the streets?

B Yeah. My mother always said that my heart was restless. She used to tell me to cut it out, but I couldn't. I was intoxicated by the streets. I couldn't stay home. I would always be out in the streets or in the pool room. I was never home, only for a couple of hours just to sleep.

A Did you have a lot of differences with your parents?

B No, I think my parents were pretty cool.

A But you just didn't want to stay home.

B I wanted to be out with my friends.

A You mentioned that in your fights, not only did you fight with your fists or stilettos, but that once you pushed a refrigerator . . .

B We pushed one refrigerator and part of a stove off a roof onto Mott Street.

A Did you look to make sure there was nobody underneath?

B No, I was too tired from pushing it off.

A Did you give any thoughts to the fact that somebody might have been crushed?

B No, I was all psyched up to kill the opponents.

A Oh, you were in a gang fight?

B Yes, I didn't do that for kicks!

A You really didn't hate the other gangs, did you? Was it hatred? Did you despise them or was it for the excitement?

B Sometimes, I hated them and sometimes we did it for excitement. I think that later on we used to fight other Chinese, a group of kids from Hong Kong. We hated that group.

A What led to your hatred?

B Whenever I saw this guy's face, it made me feel all sorts of hatred. I was here all my life on Mott Street. Here comes this group from I don't know where and they had the audacity to say, "You have that side of the street and we have this side." The street was always open. You could walk anywhere without this hassle. Then these people came and said, "We have this street and you can't walk on it. It was so ridiculous. I looked at those guys and I said, "You really got balls. There ain't no way this is coming down on us." And they would get uptight and say, "You don't know who you are or what you are." So for two years we had a lot of skirmish between them and us.

A How would you describe these skirmishes?

B Oh, free for alls, fists, boulders. One time we threw boulders at each other. One time they were doing some kind of construction on Bowery and they had a pit and huge concrete boulders on the side. Some of the guys threw some of the opponents into the pit and started throwing dirt and boulders down there.

A Did anybody get hurt?

B I don't know, I was so busy fighting myself.

A How many were involved at one time.

B It was Chinese fighting amongst Chinese so there were less people--about twenty.

A What year was this?

B 1964 or '65.

A Out of all these activities, nobody went around killing, mugging, and burglarizing?

B We tried but we never got to the point where we actually completed what we set out to do.

A You mean you planned it?

B We used to plan.

A And who would be the targets? Anybody who just happened to be passing by?

B People who belonged to the other side, a member of the other gangs.

A You didn't see an old lady and say, "She's an easy target"?

B We wouldn't do that!

A So how are present day gangs different from former ones?

B These gang kids have adopted guns. That is about the only difference. They have discovered that power is associated with guns. Before we never ripped off a store on a regular basis. If someone needed money, more than likely, we would borrow money and try to repay it somehow. We would borrow money from someone who was working. I still owe money from those days. These gangs now found out what they can get with guns, and they go out and use up money like water.

In those days, the only reason you needed money was for bowling. Sometimes we could generate money by bowling for money or betting on the side. Some of us had part-time jobs at the bowling alleys. If we went on a date, it was a cheap date, like a movie which cost $1.50. For that I would ask my parents for money, or I would try to borrow money from one of my friends. But these kids use money up like it was water. On the average day, they spend up to $100. They will go uptown and treat each other to all sorts of food. Chinatown is different. In Chinatown, you can eat for free, but they go uptown to go to the movies, buy clothes, and they take taxis if they don't have their own car. They spend money freely, and they regenerate it by ripping off people and the stores. They try to kill the opponents also. I say "try" because usually they are not successful.

They do it by accident if they kill somebody.

A You mean they are not really out to kill someone viciously? They don't mark him and say "Look, let's kill him."?

B They mark him really good, but they are awful shots. I don't know how the hell they miss. If they were effective in their marksmanship, all the gang problems would have been over a couple of years ago because everyone would be dead. But these kids are awful shots. They hit bystanders, the windows, and the buildings. But of all the attacks they have had, they don't hit what they want to hit. On a percentage basis, they are forty percent effective.

A Then they are not like the old gangs in that they just rip off the other gangs but they rip off innocent people?

B They don't really rip off other gangs, they are out to do the other gangs in. But to support themselves, they rip off other people and they extort.

A Is the reason why they are out to get other gangs is so that they can control the territory to rip off the people to survive?

B They fight for economic reasons — to get the top reputation. The gangs are out to do each other in, not because they hate each other, but the gang that has the reputation of being the toughest thereby gets the support from the tongs.

A Tell me about the tong connections.

B The tong connection has been there since 1965. The tongs saw the youths as a source of replenishing their own ranks. I guess one or two other tongs saw them for other uses, which is what they are being used for now, which is to use them as bouncers and runners.

A Is it true that without the tongs, the gangs would fold up?

B Without the tongs, the gangs would not have gotten this far. Once the tongs started offering money to do what the gangs are doing today, that made it a gang, not formed out of a need for social interaction, but a profession, a job. Become a gang member and you have a job, a salary, a place to eat. The tongs provide places to stay. They give you money and a crash pad. They have certain places where you could go to eat for free. Plus you don't have to worry about how to buy the next pair of pants, or something like that.

A Do you think kids have to worry about money to buy a pair of pants?

B I am sure that a lot of parents buy clothes for the kids. But kids don't want that any more. They want to have money in their hands to buy whatever style they want to buy.

A Actually the main motivating force in being a gang member now is the money?

B Money is the main one. There are other factors and this is especially true for smaller groups, such as security from other gangs and other ethnic groups.

A Do today's kids experience the same problems that you met up with? I mean being beaten up in school?

B There was a while back, about four years ago, when the Hispanics were coming on strong with the fights with the Chinese.

A If a kid minds his own business today, can he avoid getting beat up and avoid joining the gang?

B An ordinary kid will find it hard not to come into contact with the gangs in one way or another. At this time, the gangs are out recruiting. They will be at certain high schools, junior high schools, and even elementary schools to get kids to join their gangs to increase their manpower.

A How do they go about it?

B Some use tact and some use brutal force. They say, "Join our gang or else we'll whip you out." When they do that, it is a big head trip for the victim. "They are going to beat me up until I join the gang." The kid is either going to go to the authorities and see what they can do or he is going to ask his mother whether they can move out of town. If you go to the school authorities, they are good only for the hours from nine to three. They might help the kid at that time, but once he is a block away from school, the school authority is only like a public citizen and can only go so far to help other kids from being beat up. They will help out only during their working hours. The police are all tied up so they can't help out that much. If the parents went and pressed a complaint, and a certain number of people are picked up, identified, and brought to court, it is very rare that the gang members get to the point where they are put in jail.

If a case goes to court, they get bail money and the kid is out in the street again. If the gang member is out on the streets, the police cannot protect the victims because they don't have the manpower. This is where the kid starts sweating. He went to the authorities, and he is depending on them to send the guy away so that the gang kids won't be around to threaten him anymore. When he does this, he assumes that they are not going to be around for a long time. This is false; they might be away for a year.

What happens if I walked into the school yard and got beat up? I report it to the police; I press charges. There is a line-up and I identify every kid that hit me. I go to court with a solid case. That kid may be gone for a year. The charge is just felonious assault or assault with a deadly weapon. The maximum sentence is only a couple of years. Usually, they are given a minimum sentence, which is further slashed with parole time. So if I send a whole gang to jail, and I thought I did my bit as Joe-blow citizen, in half a year, those kids will be out and they will be looking for me because I put them in there. And the cops have got nothing to say anymore. In fact, they won't know you anymore. They got arrest numbers in their jacket and they don't care anymore after that.

A So what recourse is there for this poor child?

B Join another gang or join the church group.

A Does the church group help?

B The church group is another social group and sometimes the gang won't get involved with that because they are considered sissy, and they don't bother with them. They can join other groups like Project Reach, Boy Scouts, or Young Life. They might stay in school and join extracurricular clubs.

A But you come home at six o'clock; they will still get you.

B But they don't see you that much.

A Is that any consolation?

B No.

A So it is tough for a kid growing up?

B It is very tough unless you are identified with a group that's strictly into sports.

A Then the gangs don't touch you?

B They don't bother with you.

A Do you think that Project Reach (A social service program to help pre-delinquent teenagers.) really takes the kids off the streets and prevents them from going into the gangs?

B The potential of Project Reach or just about any program is that it should help alleviate the gang problem.

A Has it?

B To a certain degree, I suppose it has.

A How many youngsters does it have now?

B In three years, I think a couple of hundred youngsters went through the program.

A And none of them are gang members now?

B I can't say that. Some of them were gang members, some are still gang members and some are in jail now.

A What separated the ones that became gang members and ones that did not?

B It is attitude. The proud or cocky person invites a fight and the gangs live on that. They like to use fear as a weapon. But if you run away or walk to the other side of the street, you avoid problems.

A They don't look down on you for that?

B You don't exist for them.

A So that is a defense mechanism, if you don't want to be involved . . .

B Run away from them? Some kids do that.

A Do you think that gang members, in general, are school drop-outs?

B Yes, they have found another life style. I used to work with gang members, with the Black Eagles. I told them, "Listen, go to school. I know it is hard but at least when you come out, you won't be a

waiter or a worker in a laundry. You can have money, support a wife, a family." They say, "Okay, okay." Then they turn around and join a gang, and they drop out of school. This is the truth. One of the guys I told this to drove by one day and beeped the horn. I turned around to look at the driver and saw one of the kids I had told to go back to school. He dropped out. He's about 17. He's driving an Eldorado. He's a member of a gang. And I have a beat-up Volkswagon. I'm the one who told the kid to go to school to earn good money so he could buy good things? He shows me he has a Cadillac.

A Do these gang members, when they get into fights like that, know that they are in constant danger and that they might get killed any moment? Do they ever give any thought to that?

B Oh yeah. When a kid first joins a gang, or when the gang first forms, they are very arrogant. They want to prove themselves. So they fight like crazy. They will do anything to get into a fight. As the years go by, they reach an age where they want to get serious with a girl. They want to be able to go to a movie without a fear of getting shot. They want to be able to do things without having to look behind their backs. And they find that they always have to do that. They never relax and when they relax, things happen. They get to a point where they want to get out of a gang, but they face the reality that they can't or they are not allowed to because, number one, they are already a marked member of a gang. When people see him, they say, "There's what's his face. He belongs to that gang. He's number three in that gang."

Suppose a guy is eighteen. He's number three in a gang. He wants to go out on a date with a girl and get serious about a girl and the girl says, "Why don't you cut that out and let's get serious." He says, "Yes, I want to." So they go shopping, say, in Macy's. In Macy's they run into a rival gang member. He finds he has to run down the aisle in Macy's, rush down a couple of escalators, dragging his girl behind him because there are two or three guys from the rival gang over there. So they can't even go shopping. This is in Macy's! Suppose he wants to work. Money in the streets is exaggerated, and there isn't that much. It depends on who you are and it varies every week. Money ranges from $10 or $15 to a couple of hundred a week.

A How do you get paid?

B They get paid from one certain person from the association. He gives it to the head of the gang. He dispenses the money among

his beat friends and then the money gets filtered down. The lower you are on the totem pole, the less you get. That is how it works. Sometimes, you get more money. Sometimes, you get less.

A But the money you extort yourself is your own?

B It is not the top echelon or the old gang members who extort. It is the younger members and occasionally the older members. But mostly, it is the younger members because they don't have the money. So they go out and extort, or rip off, or mug to get money.

A That doesn't make sense because the tongs are supposed to protect the merchants. And if the tongs can't protect their stores from the gang members, they have no business collecting from the merchants.

B The merchants pay the tongs for protection, but a couple of months ago a furniture store got ripped off in front of everybody. This was about three o'clock in the morning, in the same building as the Chinese community school and the headquarters of the Chinese Benevolent Association. The store got ripped off with all the people standing in front of it. A truck drove up. Some Chinese kids got out. They opened the truck; they broke a window; and they just looted everything in the store in front of everybody. Either nobody realized it or they were afraid to say anything.

The merchants pay the tongs protection. The gangs are supposed to be working for the tongs and are supposed to obey whatever the tongs say. In the beginning, this worked beautifully, but now the gangs don't listen to what the tongs say because the tongs are old men. The old men will not carry guns or fight themselves, so the gangs say, "Okay, if I do anything for you, it is because I am breaking my back to listen to you. But if I want to do something, I am going to do it regardless of what you say." This happened in the past with the Black Eagles. The Black Eagles went on a spree where they were mugging people outright in the streets and the hallways. Kids coming out of Chinese school got mugged. They were mugging everybody and extorting like crazy. The tongs told them not to do it and the gang said, "The hell with you. You are all old men." So the old men turned around and made a deal with another gang. I guess they talked it over with the police, and they kicked out the Black Eagles and made it possible for the Ghost Shadows to come into town. Now the Ghost Shadows are in control. The old men can't do much but they know how to use their money. If a gang becomes very arrogant

and will not listen to them, they will import another gang, buy another gang, and tell them to take over.

A Have the Ghost Shadows done the same thing? Are they becoming very arrogant?

B The Ghost Shadows are not as outrageous. They still rip off people, but they are not as outrageous as the Black Eagles were. We are not saying that they are cool, but we are saying that they are using their heads sometimes.

A They are the main gang now?

B Yes, they have been for the past two years. (1975-1977)

A More killings have occurred within the past two years than previously.

B Because there are other gangs that want to take over. A gang would just enjoy staying on Mott Street and not fight at all. But since they are on Mott Street, oth r gangs want to take over. And other gangs want to become the people on Mott Street. So what they do is try to kill off the gang.

A Are they not responsible for the muggings and the extortions?

B Personally, I know most of them, and they are not really the type to go out and become really arrogant and want to beat you up. They do it a little, but they don't have the same attitude. I don't know how to explain it.

A They are not ruthless?

B They were ruthless in the beginning. They were a gang in the beginning and they used to get beat up every day. I know that on Henry Street, they used to sit there and hang out because they didn't want to deal with the kids on Mott Street. The Ghost Shadows were first known as the East Broadway boys. They were a small clique of guys together. Then more people got together and stayed with them, not because they wanted to form a gang, but because these people felt safe by being together. People who can't walk down Mott Street have to stay on the outskirts. The East Broadway boys became known as the Henry Street boys. One day, a group of them went to a coffee shop and ate. When the bill was handed them somecne signed "Ghost Shadows," and walked out. That is exactly how it all got started.

A Do you think that most of the gang members are from Hong Kong and

already were into gangs in Hong Kong?

B They were exposed to this kind of activity in Hong Kong. Though I have never been there, I heard that the life style is pretty rough especially if you are young. School there is much worse, and the job situation is really bad. The money situation is really tight, and the kids go around in gangs. Gangs there number in the hundreds. A lot of them carry guns, and there are a lot of killings. These kids come over at the age of thirteen and have already been exposed to that. They say, "We used to do it in Hong Kong, so why can't we do it here?" There is some kind of influence from Hong Kong.

A How about getting out of the gangs and trying to get a job?

B I am saying that a kid who wants to get out will find it extremely hard to get out because he is still considered a gang member even though he doesn't want to be a gang member. If he can get himself up to the point of telling some people in his own gang that he doesn't want to be in the gang anymore, and he gets away with that, gangs on the outside will still regard him as a gang member. The only way to do it is to move away or gradually move out. I know one kid who's trying to do it now. He's going to school and gradually spending more time at school and at home. But it depends on who you are. If you have gone through life in the gang as really tough, arrogant, and a warmonger, and all of a sudden make a reverse, that won't go down. But if you have always been known to be on the side, it will be easier. If you have been in the center of things, it will be very hard, not only because of the people on the outside but the people on the inside. They will call you a queer, which is like the lowest thing one gang member could call another gang member. It means that to the gang's way of thinking, that person can't be trusted. There is nothing worse. Not only will your own gang try to rub you out, but people on the outside will say, "This guy isn't even worth living. We should wipe him off to help mankind."

A What do girls have to do with gang members?

B It is like a spin off on the old days of motorcycle gangs. Though they are not exactly a gang member, they are a branch of the gang.

A Do girls like their boy friends to be a gang member?

B Not really. If you are in a gang, you don't want girls around

at all except for sex. In fact, it is very rare that you see guys in a gang go out with girls in a sister gang because those girls are considered whores. Just grab one of them and go into the closet. A lot of these guys don't look upon these girls as someone they would go out with seriously.

A Don't girls look up to gang members? Don't they say, "Oh boy, he's got a lot of money to spend."

B I think they do. I think there are some like that.

A What is the general feeling of girls toward gang members?

B They think it is a hip thing.

A Is it something like a football hero?

B I don't know exactly, but the girls that are in gangs of their own have rival gangs too, and they get into violent things, but not killing yet.

A What do you think is the future for gangs?

B I think they are here to stay unless something happens.

A What is that something?

B If they kick some of those old men out of Chinatown. If everybody, and that means from the waiter to the owner of a garment factory, starts speaking up. If they all start complaining, bitching and putting pressure on the tongs, if they all start supporting programs to help kids, if they all start to vote. That is the only way you are going to get the gangs out of Chinatown.

A Do the kids complain a great deal about their mothers and their fathers?

B They feel alienated, but I think it is more the sort of thing I went through in the gang. I was full of hot blood. I had all sorts of energy. I found that my parents were like anchors, trying to hold me down from all the glory I could obtain. There was no animosity toward them. It was just stand back and let me do my own thing.

A You think it is a phase?

B I think it is a phase? I'm certain that there are parents who are real bummers for their kids. But I think, on the main, the fellows are just trying to do the John Wayne thing.

A What other kind of glory can we give them besides a gun or a feeling of power or machismo, other than a gun or a car?

B If we give them a lot of talking to and a lot of exposure to different things, experience draws them away. Get them into building automobiles and get them a souped-up car. Those things would probably lead to something else, but that is one way to distract them.

A Yes, they will take the souped-up car and race down the highway.

B Or run down people on the Bowery.

A You talked about the leader of the Ghost Shadows, who was written up in the papers recently. They made him out to be quite a leader and a hero. Do you think so?

B I think in the Ghost Shadows, you are always afraid to say you are the leader. You might want to say it but you never claim to be the leader, because then you are the number one target for about four other gangs, besides putting more pressure on the cops to do something about the leader.

A You don't think the gang members want any publicity? They don't want the glory and the fame?

B I think most gangs are like that. There could be a figure head who fronts as the leader.

A Is there such a person as a godfather behind the scenes?

B The godfather is just some dude who gives you the money.

A You have been a member of the gangs. You've gone through it all, but now you are a street worker and former head of Project Reach, helping youngsters so that they don't become gang members. I would like to know what the philosophy of Project Reach is, and how is it trying to help young people so that they don't become delinquents.

B The philosophy that I wanted to project was using Project Reach as an alternative to a life style of hanging out in the streets, which we consider a negative lifestyle or a negative environment. The alternative was supposed to be offering kids other things to

get into. To facilitate that, we used different modes to try to bridge whatever the kids wanted to do like photography, camping, music, sports, whatever—something that would give them a sense of being proud of what they are doing and what they have accomplished. You try to talk to them like buddies, not parents, but buddies. You have to be a positive buddy, a positive friend.

A What is a positive buddy?

B A positive buddy is being able to say, "No, we are not going to play ball again. God dammit, we played ball the whole week. We are going to sit down and do your homework." You have to talk with them constantly. You have to realize who the person is and how you can deal with him as an individual. You cannot say, "Okay, this is how I am going to talk to everybody." Each person has his own hang-ups, especially kids. Some kids are extremely quiet so you have to treat them differently. You have to be the more aggressive one. You have to initiate everything. Other kids are very aggressive, so you have to be passive but you have to be able to tell the kid, "Hey, I have heard you for the last five hours now. Sit your ass down and listen to me."

You have to be able to pick up what kids whisper to each other. If they are talking about a gun, you have to figure how you are going to act on it depending on the person who said it. Sometimes, you realize that the person who said it never had a gun before, but he's doing it as a kick. Actually, he's more afraid of the gun than anything else. If you walk up to him and smack him in the head, he might turn around and shoot you or hold it against you and shoot you one of these days. But if you say, "Do you know what happened to this guy, Richard? He was a smart ass and had a gun that he said he'd never use. He'd use it just to protect himself. He got pissed off at his best friend and shot him." You just try to relate to them. "You don't need that kind of stuff." Every kid you talk with, you have to talk with in a different way.

A Do you think the ones who joined Project Reach were prone to be good anyway? Or do you look out for those who might get into trouble and try to give them some help?

B The people still in Project Reach are prone to be pretty good or they are in some minor difficulties with the law. But the ones who have been to Project Reach and whom we couldn't reach are the ones we should be helping. We had a couple of kids who got turned off to a certain staff at Reach, and they joined a gang. Now they are in Rikker's Island for grand theft. I have made a lot of mistakes at Reach and I realize it now. If I had

given a better training program, maybe some of the staff might have been able to help the kids, but the people who were hired had their own ideas on how to work with kids. Some of them were really good but some of them were really negative, not negative on the surface, but negative in potential.

A What is negative? Give me an example.

B To be on the staff, you can't yell at kids because that is what mothers and fathers do already. Neither can you be arrogant in front of kids. The other thing is having double standards. That is negative. Whatever your intentions, you still represent the establishment. If you come out with the attitude, "I am the staff," that is like saying, "I'm old and wise, and you're a young punk, so I can do things that you can't do." You will never get across to the kid, because unconsciously, he will block you out. He won't listen to you. He might nod but he won't listen to you because he feels you're acting like God and he doesn't need that.

A But don't they need guidance?

B They need talking. They need people to show them things, how to do things together. One example is you need a door built. So you say, "So and so, let's get this door built. Okay, bring the wood over here." The kid brings the wood over. "You know what a straight line is? Draw a straight line 23 inches across and 87 inches down and make sure the corners are square." He draws all this out. "Do you know what a saw is? Okay, cut a straight line." The kid starts cutting. His lines are crooked. "You never used a saw before? God dammit, I said a straight line and now you've wasted a whole piece of wood. We have to start all over again." That kid will take the saw and the door and fling it on the floor because you are telling him what to do, not showing him.

Showing him would be like, "Let's go get the door. Let's both put the door up on the table. Now you grab the rule, you hold it over there and I'll hold it at this end. I'll draw the line at this end, you draw it there and let's both check to see if the corners are straight. Do you know how to hold a saw? Okay, I'll saw this first half and you watch." So you are doing it, and he's watching and then he does it. You are showing him that you can do it so that lends you credibility, that you do what you talk about. Also the kid sees that you are not bossing him around. You are showing him. You are not holding him by the hand and saying, "You do it this way." You are saying, "This

is the way to do it." Then he may follow you. Certainly there are cases where the kid will say, "Finish it and the hell with it." In that case, you have to do something else. Maybe you shouldn't saw a door. Maybe get the kid to design a door. That would make him feel a little bigger. Sit down with him and prod him. You keep talking to the guys; you talk to the girls in the same way. You have to use little tricks to get them to do things.

A Do you think the language barrier is the main reason for members joining the gang?

B No, that is not the main reason why they join gangs. In fact, gang members are disenchanted with the model of the perfect kid. They are looked upon as sissies because they speak English much better, or they are better in mathematics. They say, "What do I need math or English for?"

A So it is not really good to hold up heroes or models to them?

B Not the heroes and models we have around nowadays.

A What would be a good hero that kids could relate to, Bruce Lee?

B No.

A Not the scholar.

B I don't know. I never thought about having a hero. Only when I was young.

A Who was your hero when you were young?

B My neighbor who got me to join the gang.

A Was he big and strong?

B Yeah.

A Was he into anything that was wrong? Or did he work for a living?

B He wasn't into anything wrong. He was a good bowler, and he knew how to play cards and win money.

A I am going to throw out some suggestions and I'd like you to react to them. What about helping them in school work? Do you

think that most of them need help?

B They need help but you have to get them to want to do it. Helping them is certainly one way, being buddies is very important, but being a positive buddy. Being that is to tell the boy, "I know how you are. You don't want to do your homework but what is the harm in doing it? Forget about beating up that guy. Why the hell do you want to beat up your girlfriend? You're both young. Find another girl. I'll give you my phonebook." You try to get them to laugh it off or think about it in a lighter sense. Belong to an organization. A gang is an organization but you want to get them to join a more positive organization.

A Are there enough organizations to take care of the needs?

B There are not enough. But more important, there are not enough people to know what to do with the kids. The fellow who ran Project Reach before me is on the right track. He wanted to do a training program for the staff. It is not enough that you have a program. You have to have the right people who know what the hell they are doing in the organization.

A Do you think sports and recreation help?

B It helps in that it uses up energy.

A In talking to another youth leader, I asked him whether more sports would do it and he said, "It's just a temporary stop-gap." Do you feel that way?

B One measure may help, but you need a combination of measures. You can't be specific and say this or that is guaranteed to help. Each kid needs a certain combination to kick something off in his head, to make him say, "I know." The kid can't tell you what he needs and you can't say positively what he needs. You should always keep exploring, trying different methods.

A How can you work on a one-to-one basis if you have fifty kids coming into Project Reach?

B We have ten people. For a social worker, they recommend a maximum load of twelve kids per worker. But social workers work on a more professional level where a lot of things are cut and dry. They end up doing forms for you, and they forget about the head. To work with twelve kids you just have to have the right personality. There are a lot of inten-

tions to be a good worker, but if you don't have the ability, you can do more harm than good.

A Do the parents get involved with their children very much?

B There is a tendency now for the parents to get more and more involved.

A How can they get involved when they work so hard?

B It depends on what follow-up they give their kids. If their kid tells them, "I have a problem in school," they can say, "Well, I will put you in the program and pick you up after work." or they can come to the worker and say, "This is what is going on at home. What can I do?". Maybe the parents can get some feedback from the worker.

A Do you think they are scared enough now to really . . .

B A lot of people are getting more and more involved. I was poll watching in the last election, and I didn't believe so many parents would show up. I was really surprised.

A Do you think parents are too lax in discipline? Do you advocate more discipline?

B Yeah, but then I have some cases where kids got beat up all the time. My own opinion is there isn't enough discipline in the home.

A Do you think the law should be tightened on juvenile delinquents?

B Yeah. Not to be like a right winger, but I think that certain laws should be tighter. I don't believe in the death penalty. I believe in rehabilitation, if it works?

A Does it work?

B It doesn't work but you have to try. I believe in rehabilitation to a certain degree, but I believe that the law should come down and stop giving out minimums and start handing out a few maximum sentences. That is a possible deterrent. The gangs have got away mainly because as soon as a gang member finds himself in jail, he gets a smart lawyer to get him out. You know the kid did it but the kid is still out. He got away with murder. That is just like feeding the fire. Other kids will say, "I am under sixteen. I will get away with it." That is what happens. All

the dope pushers around here are using kids under sixteen to push the dope for them. The kids get off with minimum sentences until they are eighteen.

I think they should eradicate the juvenile delinquent system altogether for certain crimes. If you shoot at somebody, you should get a maximum. If you beat up a kid, a slap on the hand the first time. The second time it happens, put the sucker away. Better than that, what I feel they should do is send the kids back to Hong Kong. Do that to a couple of cases and then the parents start saying, "That's not too cool," and they will come down a little harder on the kids. I know I am talking like a right winger right now, but sometimes, if you think about all that has gone down, nothing has worked. Nothing from the liberal view of trying to do things has worked with these gang kids to the right degree. If we are to find ten good community workers who can rap with the kids and get them to do things, I would say, "Forget about the maximums. Send them to these workers." But there aren't ten good workers to do that.

A You can't name ten?

B I can't name five good workers. Being a youth worker is an ego job. If you start off good, you tend to forget about your kids and start thinking about your own head. Once people get too much of a head trip, they stop becoming effective and start becoming rhetorical.

A How can schools help?

B If they start working with these youth programs more.

A Should they give more homework?

B No. Contact youth workers more and give them more information about what's going on in the school for certain kids. Another thing is to spend a little of their off time at these programs.

A Do you think more bilingual classes will help?

B I believe in bilingual classes in the beginning, for the first two years. Then it becomes too much of a crutch. Once you get a person to master the basics, then I think they should try to get away from bilingual education. If you are not in a pressured situation, you don't learn. I think you learn when you are under pressure.

A What about group dating?

B That is a very interesting idea.

A As you said, people start moving away from the gangs when they get interested in girls. Maybe the girls can serve as a magnet. Instead of dating in twosomes, because at fourteen or fifteen you are too young to be dating, organize group dating. Girls and boys can go to a picnic or get away from Chinatown. Facilitate use of cultural and recreational facilities outside of Chinatown.

B That is a positive idea.

A Take the kids up to the "Y" to swim.

B Take kids to the Natural Museum, the Hayden Planetarium or whatever. Just different turn-ons for different people. You may not affect everybody. If you take a group of twenty kids, maybe only five are interested but at least you have reached those five.

A What about a police crackdown?

B I think a police crackdown would be good.

A Do you think that the police are in cahoots with the tongs?

B Not all of them. I don't think any of the people in the crime unit in Chinatown are that much in cahoots with the tongs. The police are frustrated. They can't make a case stick. What always happens is that people who are supposed to testify back out.

A Can the police be on the alert and catch them in the act?

B They don't have the manpower to catch them in the act.

A How about using a police decoy?

B How are you going to get a police decoy? There is only one Chinese cop in Chinatown and this guy's face is recognized everywhere.

A There are an awful lot of muggings going on in Central Park so they dress a policeman up as a woman.

B But the Chinese gangs won't mug a white dude or a white woman.

They are after the Chinese. They are afraid to go outside, to hit someone else. If they unintentionally ripped off a white or even a black dude, they get plenty of pressure from the police department. Once you get in a white guy that gets hurt that means you are going to get a white lawyer and do a kid in just like that.

A So they are cowards?

B Yeah, they know where the boundaries are. They know they can't mess around with the white people. They might talk about it and say, "It's about time we stopped picking on the Chinese and go hit everyone else," but when it comes down to it, they realize that going to hit a white guy is calling in people they can't deal with.

A Why can't the police use someone who is not recognizable as a police decoy?

B The gangs don't go around mugging people. It is not a regular event.

A It's common.

B But not for the Chinese gangs. They have set up some captures in extortions. For example, a storeowner will report to the police. They jump on it. They get a thing set up. They get ready to tape it and they catch them. Then it is okay because the storeowner is willing to say, "I need help and these guys are bugging me."

A Are they in danger?

B Yes, especially if the kids get away with it. Even if the police catch them, they still may get away because of not enough evidence or the District Attorney does a poor job of prosecuting. Then that storeowner is in trouble because those kids have no recourse but to try to make trouble for that guy, making an example of him for the other storeowners. There are extortions going on all over, and you don't hear about the ones that have been successful. They don't want their faces messed up. They don't want their children threatened. They want to keep the store intact. Unless they get really uptight, they won't say anything; they will pay off. You can't blame the storeowners for not complaining or testifying.

A What do you think about all this publicity of the gang problems

in Chinatown in the media? Do you think it is for the better or the worse?

B I really think that in tne long run, it will be for the better.

A Do you think it might give the Chinese a bad image?

B Image doesn't matter if kids are getting beat up. I think it is good because it draws attention. It puts pressure on the cops, on the so-called community leaders. It brings attention to some of the agencies which might in the future provide funding. It immediately draws attention and it is more likely that there will be funding available.

A Do you think that the community leaders are doing anything?

B Last time they had a community meeting, they had the District Attorney come down. They had a big meeting at the Chinese school. Throughout the entire meeting, you had establishment-type leaders get up and say, "Business is down forty percent. We have to do something about these gangs. They are dangerous to the community." Another leader gets up: "It is not safe to open up the stores past 6:00 P.M. anymore. These kids are coming in to rip off my money. Not one person mention the people getting killed. The whole emphasis is, "Business is forty percent down."

A Who is getting killed?

B Kids, they are killing each other and wounding and killing bystanders. Mothers are not sleeping safe. They don't care about that. Only that, "Business is forty percent down." The rich are not getting as rich as they could be. And poor people don't care anyway. The only time they bring down the D. A. is because business is forty percent down and then they have the guts to say, "What we've got to do is get a new police chief. A new police chief and crime will come down." That is bullshit because under the police chief that we had, Chinatown was safer than it had been for a long time. He cracked down on everything including gambling houses, kids, gangs. They didn't like it so they exploited an incident and made it a big thing. They got 10,000 working women outside in the streets marching like a bunch of idiots because of police brutality. I didn't know what to make of that. I was at that demonstration yelling my brains out too. But at the planning meetings for that demonstration, the leaders were saying, "Let's just get the police chief out." Some community program leaders said,

"Let's use this to improve social conditions, get more facilities." "No, no, let's get the police chief and deal with that later on." That is exactly what happened. They had 10,000 people marching around City Hall, demonstrating and finally they get inside to see the Deputy Mayor. The mayor doesn't want to deal with Chinatown. If the Blacks, Italians or any other group had 10,000 people marching around City Hall and they wanted to see the mayor and didn't get to see him, they could have demanded the governor to come down, and the governor would have to send a representative down. Ten thousand people and they use that to get rid of the police chief so that they can open up their gambling houses again. That is where their heads are at.

A What would you have done?

B I would have been satisfied if they gave more money for the programs that existed or put more cops in the street.

A Is it hard for teenagers to find decent jobs?

B Yeah, there are no jobs. The only thing that comes along is the Youth Corps slots in the summer. That is the only time those kids get a break.

A What suggestions do you have for that? Do you think a program could be set up to help youth get jobs outside of Chinatown?

B At one time I thought about using Youth Corps slots, but instead of having the kids work in Chinatown, I would write away to lawyers, publishing companies, parks, programs and all sorts of businesses and say, "We have one hundred kids for jobs. Would you like to have an apprentice for free for the summer to expose to your related field in whatever job you have for him?" I am not talking about being a delivery boy. I am talking about showing him how to set up a newspaper, or sit there and retype some court documents, or sit in the court and tape record a couple of suits that are going on. I mean doing creative and constructive things, something that you would learn from. I think that would be a good idea.

A That is a very good suggestion. Now what about a crackdown on the gambling houses?

B If they closed those son-of-a-bitches and just open them on the weekend and limit it to people over 21, that would be cool. I mean limiting the age. I don't think you can wipe them out.

A How about shutting down the garment factories on weekends so that the mothers will stay home?

B That is no good unless you get additional money.

A Do you think the Chinese families are that poor?

B I don't think they are really poor. I think that the lowest income, if you lump all the earnings together, is lower-middle income for most of them. I think the recent immigrants are in bad shape though. Most of those that have been here for a couple of years have found themselves steady jobs. If they put in the hours, they get good money. That is where it is -- putting in the hours. You can't expect someone to work in the garment factory for only five hours a day, go home and take care of the kids, and have enough money to survive on. To have money to survive on, they have to put in the time and that is unfortunate. I don't think you can shut down the garment factories on weekends unless you can get them to start paying better wages.

A Do you think the factories would still be competitive if they had to pay more wages? The factories would move out of the city. Then there would be no jobs.

B You're right. All the garment factories are moving down south. More clothes are made down south than in New York City. At one time, this was the garment center, this was where the factories were. But now everything has gone to the sun belt. You can't raise wages, and you can't tell them to close down on weekends. This is the way it is. It is the only way Chinese people, at this point, can earn some money. They don't make money to buy luxury items. What they do is buy the necessities. They don't do too much planning. I know they sock away money out of their pay check. I think they would get panicky if they did not have the money. They are saving a nest-egg.

A So that they can move out of Chinatown, perhaps?

B If they are lucky and nothing happens to them before then, they move out of Chinatown. But they have to have money in the bank for emergencies, especially for those in the garment industry. Garment jobs are a seasonal job. Some months, there is hardly any work at all. Then those people put in an hour a week. At other times they need help twenty-four hours a day and could still use more. My mother is a garment factory worker.

A When she is not working does she get something from the union?

B She gets unemployment. How much can you get from unemployment? The tops is $75 a week. For most of them, if they work consistently, they will make over $200 or $190 in wages. If it falls down, you get $95. But unemployment is $70 to $75. That is nothing if you have an apartment in Chinatown where the rent is over $160.

A Looking back, if you had to do it all over again, would you have joined the gangs?

B Oh yeah, I would have joined my type of gang but not the present-day type of gang because if anything happens today, it is too final. At least in those days, if you got beaten, you could get up in a week, and you could get back at them. Now it is too final. You are shot. That will lay you down forever.

A Thank you very much, Spencer Wong.

THE HARD CORE

In my research, I had ample opportunity to talk to youths who were on the periphery of gangs or who were former gang members. These young men were never very much involved, so that they could ease themselves out of the group without too much notice. These youths, having matured or looking to their future, were back in school or college trying to make something out of their lives. Some even saw the perniciousness of the gangs and tried to prevent others from falling into the same trap. See interviews on pages 3 to 54.

Of course these interviews tell one side of the story, and an important one at that. The answers elicited come from sobered minds either from having come through the experience or having resisted the pressures to join. However, I wanted the other side of the story. What were hard-core gang members like? Obviously it was difficult to get anyone to talk to me, but I did manage to set up an interview with two. They would not allow me to tape the interview, and it was difficult to take notes when I was trying to watch their reactions and their facial expressions as well as keep up the momentum of the interview, but I will try to reconstruct some of the pertinent points and offer some comments.

The hard core members were definitely different from the peripheral members. In the first place they were highly suspicious even after I told them I was not interested in them individually, I did not want their names or identity, I just hoped that they would answer some questions. They agreed to converse with me, but first they searched the apartment where the interview was held to make sure that no hidden persons or microphones were present. Even then, their eyes darted back and forth to the door continually, and in their nervousness, I became somewhat nervous as well. They would not even respond to what I thought was a simple question: How old are you? When pressed for the reason why, they gave very revealing information: They were aware of the juvenile laws protecting those under sixteen, and to state that they were over sixteen might subject them to more severe

consequences in case they were caught in any infraction of the law. The youths looked no more than sixteen to eighteen, although it slipped out later in our conversation they were over eighteen years of age.

DRESS

Their attire was simple and unobtrusive: no leather jackets emblazon with insignias or identifying emblems, no flashy suits or shirts or boots. They wore narrow black pants, dark colored shirts, and short jackets. They did not wear their hair very long. In fact, they were rather neat, and one fellow kept pulling a comb through his hair while we talked. Nothing was spectacular about their appearance. I would not recognize them again anywhere. The only thing that I noted was their arrogance and the glaze in their eyes. Beyond that, they looked like any average high school student.

SCHOOLING

Both were immigrants and both school dropouts. School had never appealed to them either in Hong Kong or in New York. One had been in this country for more than five years, and he spoke English quite well, considering the fact that he had seldom gone beyond the borders of Chinatown. They seemed to have innate intelligence, but I definitely got the impression that they did not think it was worth the effort to apply themselves to the task of learning.

DOMINANT INTEREST - MONEY

Their overwhelming interest was MONEY. This topic dominated the conversation. Money meant easy money, not the kind that you worked or labored for. When I broached the subject of earning money, they burst out laughing. One of the youths said, "I worked once, washing dishes for $100 a week. I worked one week. No more washing dishes for me! Do you know that I can now make $100 in one minute?" And he punctured the air with his forefinger. "One hundred dollars in one minute," he repeated, "one minute! How do I get $100 so easily? I'll tell you. I take a gun, go into a restaurant, point it at the owner, and I come out with the money."

"What if he doesn't give it to you?" I asked.

"See what will happen if he doesn't," snarled one of the youths. And he bared his teeth in a most threatening manner.

"Did you ever stop to think that that man may have worked all week to make that $100, and you took it away from him in one minute?"

A look of complete surprise spread over the young man's face. He was caught off guard. I don't believe he had ever thought of the situation in that light before. It had never occurred to him that someone else's hard work was behind that $100 that he had extorted so easily. It took him a while to recover and to reply, but the tone of his voice indicated that the point had struck a chord in his conscience, but he came up with a quick retort. "The tiger eats the wolf. The strong triumphs over the weak. I am the stronger. The weak will have to look out after themselves."

I asked them what they wanted the money for. It was my turn to be surprised. One said he gave it to his mother. The other said he was supporting his brothers and sisters. Both said, "Who doesn't need money?" Yet it was obvious that they did not spend it on a nice place to live because they repeatedly commented on the apartment in which the interview was being held. I had borrowed the place in Chinatown for the interview. To me, it was a modern apartment, simply furnished, but clean and neat. Yet one of the fellows kept exclaiming, "Gee the people who live here must be rich." The first time he said it, I gave a matter-of-fact reply, "No, they work for the government and earn a salary." The second time he said it, I thought: Heavens! I hope he doesn't plan to rob this place.

They asked me to give them some money for talking to me. They wanted $100. At that point I thought they were going to take it from me anyway, so I emptied out my purse, which contained about $30. They were disappointed at the amount, but for obvious reasons would not accept a check.

DEATH WISH

I asked if being a member of a gang, they were aware of the dangers they subjected themselves to. Both nodded their heads. The fact that they could be shot at or be dead any moment was a fate that they accepted. They almost seemed apathetic and resigned to the possibility. This reaction brings back a recollection that I had with another gang member on a previous occasion. His startling response to the same question was, "I don't care if I die. I want to die." Is it possible that some of the gang members have suicidal tendencies or death wishes?

The young man who made the above statement was handsome, charismatic, and extremely intelligent. He always wore his shirt half-way unbuttoned revealing his muscular chest. At least two other young men

always accompanied him following him around half-dazed in hero-worship. He was a student of mine. After the mid-term exam, I was surprised to find that his grade was the highest in the entire class.

Shortly thereafter, policemen came up to the school looking for him. It was alleged that he had openly fired against five or six people who stood in his way when he tried to crash a dance. This charming, handsome, intelligent young man was trying very hard to destroy himself.

FIREARMS

Asked how they got their firearms or weapons, the gang members were evasive except to say that it was very easy. One offered to get me a gun for $75. They were also evasive about who paid them, although they did acknowledge someone did pay them. The money was given to one designated member of the gang who made the payoffs. The older members got more; the younger ones got a hand-out. If it was not enough to sustain them they would go out and mug or rob. Mugging or robbing is not a gang activity -- in other words, it is not something that the gang plans and carries out or even encourages. It is more of a private venture by those who need some cash to tide them over. Other gang members, however, tell a different story. According to a private confession that appeared in the World Journal of January 2, 1977 one youth told how he was instructed to extort. He said:

> I am a foreign student from Hong Kong. I came to the United States two years ago. I had a job in China-town which was merely to alert the gambling casinos against a police raid. One day my friend Hung came to my house and asked me to meet his Big Brother. The Big Brother said to me, "I've been watching you for more than a month. You are very political and skillful in my sight. Ordinarily you would have to do more things to become a Third Brother, but now I'll give you $1,200 to become a Third Brother. All you have to do is to check out our territory and collect money from the stores.
>
> I accepted the offer and started my job. My job was to collect money from the restaurants and stores. The trick was to tell some young kids to go into the restaurants, eat and not pay. If the owner makes a fuss, I come in and act like a hero. I give those kids a little rough stuff and tell them they had better not

back any more. The owner will then offer me a meal and thank me with all his heart.

The next day, I'll go back to the restaurant and tell the owner I'll protect his place from these hoodlums if he'll pay $400 a month. This was my job, day in and day out.

This was not an easy way to make money. It is dirty money and suffering money. I've been shot a few times and I got knifed in my hip once. This job means death every minute for me. My friend Hung is already dead, but it is very hard for me to give up this job because of my bad situation. Even if I want to get a decent job, it isn't possible because of my record.

I write many letters home to my parents telling them how hard I am studying. I mail them $800 a month. If I quit this job, how can I face my parents with no education and no money? There's no way out for me now.

Sometimes no protection is better than gang protection. A case reported in the China Post of October 18, 1976, told how the owner of a theater paid the Ghost Shadows $2,000 for protection because a special singing troupe was performing that night, and he did not want trouble. The Flying Dragons found out and called the police to report that Ghost Shadow members had brought guns to the theater. The police went and searched the theater and arrested two Ghost Shadow members. The next day, the Flying Dragons shot down two Ghost Shadow members in front of the theater. The Fly Dragons were saying, "You should have hired us instead of the Ghost Shadows."

STRUCTURE

The structure of the gangs is more of a loose and fluid outfit with no one acknowledged leader. Even if one was the leader, he would keep a low profile. Membership must be constantly replenished. "Pads" were provided for members to hang out in or to sleep, if necessary. No gang member need go hungry. Food was available at specified restaurants.

PERSONALITY

My overall impression of the two young men I spoke with on that particular day was that they were heartless and cold. The glint in their eyes was frightening. Warmth and humanity were lacking in their personalities, yet their ill-gotten gains were shared with their families. Perhaps they had never been exposed to compassion for their fellow man before. Certainly their surprised reaction to my question about their extortion victim revealed that.

I cannot assert that the two whom I directly interviewed were representative of hard-core gang members. My former student certainly seemed to me to be atypical in that he was in college, intelligent and personable, and he also had enough pocket money to spend. One day he told me his mother had bought him a brand new car. A month later, he had managed to smash it up so badly it had to go to the junk heap.

Another dynamo of a young man, who claimed to be the leader of a peripheral gang in New York, surfaced briefly some years ago. Again, he was handsome, intelligent, charismatic, a smooth talker, and a college graduate. It seemed that he took a payoff of more than $200 weekly from the associations for years, and that is how he financed his education. Somewhere along the line, he realized his mistake and tried to switch sides from the evil to the good by trying to dissuade other youths from joining the gangs. He even appeared on a network radio show to point the finger at responsible parties. Obviously his behavior was not tolerated. A contract was put on his head, and he discreetly left town. Rumor has it that he went to South America. No one has heard from him since.

A youth services worker who has worked with gangs for years has done some analysis of the rise and fall of gangs. It is his contention that gang membership consists primarily of those from age fourteen to eighteen. After eighteen, the fellows become interested in girls and start settling down. At the lower end of the age scale are some gang members who are only ten years old. It is appalling to realize that the arm of crime has reached down to claim those at such a tender age.

I must admit that it was rather difficult to pin the two young men down to specific answers. They were extremely tense and edgy, and as I said before, their eyes kept darting back and forth in expectation of impending danger. Even though they claimed that crime was an easy road to easy money, I felt that the price they paid was dear -- much too dear.

Streetdude,
try waking up
some morning
breathing air
not filled with cigarettes
and despair.

Try
to leave
the gun
unholstered
empty.

Streetdude,
stop trying
to fly,
getting high
hopped up
doped up
coked up
op'd up

fucked up
not knowing why.
No nickel bag
of wild dreams
can set you free
from your chingchong
misery.

But hey
streetdude,
you with the no-name
no face
of no particular
significance,
hey,
you got to know
.38 caliber kung fu
works both ways.

. . . and know this:
if you can't
do the time
don't
do the crime.

They'll cage you
dead
in your prime
and you
nonthinking,
nonknowing,
no fraction of time
without freedom
is worth the living.

STREETDUDE

by
Henry Chang

CHINATOWN CIVIC LEADER

No one likes what is going on in Chinatown, not even the ones who seem to foment the trouble. Things have gotten out of hand, and the "Frankenstein" monster cannot be hauled back into the laboratory and be contained.

In my search to get all sides of the situation, I wanted to interview someone who had the "inside dope", so to speak, with the establishment. Everyone was cautious and refused to be interviewed. The gentleman I interviewed below agreed to talk but did not want to be identified in any way, so I cannot give his background or else he would be recognized. In any event, he is thoroughly familiar with the community, with internal workings of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), which presumes to be the governing body of Chinatown, with the Chinese language newspapers, with the political situation both China-wise and Chinatown-wise, with the people who are influential, and with the everyday happenings that occurred over the past eight years. He has worked with youth groups in Chinatown. His knowledge comes from the fact that he is involved, and he is there five to seven days a week. In his response to my questions, I am afraid he was too circumspect. He did not talk freely, but pondered and mulled over every word that he uttered. He knew, but he was not telling all -- just skimming the surface. Nevertheless, I would like to present the interview.

A How long have you been on the Chinatown scene?

B I've been in Chinatown since 1969, almost eight years.

A Would you say Chinatown is a very tight, closed community?

B Yes, I would say so.

A Is there a great deal of dissension and conflict now going on in Chinatown?

B Could you explain your question a little bit, conflict between whom?

A It seems that the Chinatown Planning Council (CPC) and the Chinese Benevolent Association (CCBA) are constantly at odds. CPC accuses the CCBA of not doing anything for the welfare of Chinatown, and CCBA thinks CPC is trying to take over.

B It is true that last year, the CCBA and CPC fought very hard over the old P.S. 23 building that the City wanted to lease to Chinatown. Each claimed to be the power in Chinatown. In the end, the building was given to the CCBA. The CCBA has a long history and deep roots in Chinatown. It is made up of sixty member organizations representing many groups. The president of CCBA is elected by the member organizations although a few strong associations such as the Ning Yeung and Lin Sing, the On Leong Merchant's Association and the Hip Sing Association, the Kuomintang (KMT or Nationalist Party) and the Chamber of Commerce have the most say. CPC is a service organization. It gets funding from private groups and from the government to run programs. It cannot claim to represent the community.

A You say some member organizations have more say than others in CCBA. Of the ones you mentioned, would you say the On Leong and Hip Sing and the KMT have the most influence?

B No, no. The Ning Yeung Association is the strongest. Ning Yeung is the association for all people from Toishan, and they are the strongest in number. The presidency goes every other term to a person from the Ning Yeung Association. The tong members cannot be president.

A Would you say the president is a figurehead or does he have much power?

B On all matters not involving the tongs, he has a lot to say.

A But who supports the CCBA? Certainly not the members through dues, which are minimal? Most of the money comes from the On Leong and Hip Sing, am I right?

B CCBA raises money from donations. It collects rent from its building, and for special purposes, Hip Sing and On Leong will pay.

A The CCBA has also been challenged by the young people as being insensitive to the problems of Chinatown.

B There have been a few instances of the young people attacking CCBA,

but not all young people are against CCBA. Every summer, CCBA hires from one hundred to three hundred people to work for them.

A Most of the leaders in CCBA are older men. Do you think they will ever relinquish their positions to younger people?

B Depends upon what you mean by younger. There are younger men going into the associations now. These are the new immigrants. Now the leaders of CCBA are 55 or older. In about five or six years, I would say the leaders will all be under 55.

A Then can we expect changes?

B With the younger leaders, a lot of things will be changed. I noticed that on last year's election ballot for president of CCBA there were many names that had never appeared before.

A How much control does CCBA have over Chinatown?

B Within the sixty member organizations it has a lot of control, but outside of these groups, there is little control, so you can say CCBA does not have 100 percent control over Chinatown.

A But will CCBA accept any new members? When was the last time they admitted a new member?

B No new member has been admitted for the last twenty years.

A What do you see as the most pressing problems of Chinatown?

B As you know, we used to have very few Chinese come to the United States. One hundred and five a year for the whole country. Now we have more than 20,000 per year, and most of them come to New York's Chinatown. The community is too small, and the new immigrants have created a lot of problems. For example, jobs, housing, including the youth problem.

A How has CCBA dealt with these problems? In the meetings, do they bring up these questions and discuss ways of dealing with the problem?

B Of course. These questions have been discussed, and the member organizations have been asked to take care of their own people. For instance, the Wong Family Association was asked to take care of all those whose surname is Wong. Someone from Shanghai should go to the Sam Kiang Association. The trouble is these associations are not professionals. They do not know how to help their people who have problems.

A What you are saying then is that the CCBA can't handle the problem, they don't know what to do or they don't have the money?

B They want to do something. They will never give up. They try, but they just don't have the professional manpower to do the job. That is why so many social service agencies like the CPC and Immigrant Social Services have sprung up.

A Why doesn't CCBA admit these new organizations as members?

B Perhaps the Immigrant Social Services and CPC never asked to be admitted. As far as I know, I don't believe any new member has joined CCBA for the last eighteen to twenty years.

A What role does the Chinese language media play in Chinatown?

B Presently we have seven daily papers, two radio stations and three television stations broadcasting in the Chinese language. They do carry news about the Chinese and American governments, the CCBA, the CPC and other social service agencies.

A Are any of these newspapers still subsidized by the Chinese political parties like the KMT and the Communists?

B I don't know. They themselves do not admit such connections, and there is no evidence to show that there is any relationship.

A Can the Chinese newspapers effect change? Are they powerful enough to influence public opinion for change?

B I think so. They do write editorials telling people to do the right thing. When people read these editorials their thinking is influenced.

A Somehow or other, I have a feeling that in spite of the serious problems existing in Chinatown now, nothing is being done. Even the newspapers are intimidated into silence.

B Umm.

A In your opinion, what are the main reasons giving rise to the gang problem?

B With some of the young members, they are forced to join. With others, they may have a language problem, they don't want to go school, they don't have any skills, so they can't get a job outside of Chinatown. They don't want to work in a restaurant or factory

like their parents, and they want to have money to spend, so they look for easy money. This is one group. The other group, which is more dangerous, are the people behind them. The American newspapers are always talking about the tongs or the two tongs, but these tongs have been with us since the beginning of Chinese American history. We in Chinatown know who are in the tongs. We are not afraid of them. In fact, there are a number of underground organizations operating in Chinatown today that are more to be feared.

A Who are they?

B No one knows. Those people may show up today and disappear tomorrow. They come from Canada, from San Francisco; they are very mobile. I think it is a mistake that only the young people create the problem. It is the people behind them.

A What do these other groups want? What is their purpose to come in and use the youth in gang activities? Are these other groups involved in gambling or drugs?

B It's possible, but I'm not sure. Maybe it's for private benefit or a power struggle. I think these people come to New York as individuals. Then several individuals form a group and make use of the young men who hang around in the streets.

A Is there any evidence to show that they are involved in Chinese politics?

B I can't say yes or no. I don't know.

A Are there other reasons besides those that you have given for the gang situation?

B Well, the young people like companionship. They want to be with friends their own age. If someone hurts their friend, they are going to gang up and take revenge. A lot of the gang fights are of this type. These young boys are between the ages of 14 to 18. They have a lot of energy. They like to fight.

A Is that the most prevalent age for gang members? Between 14 and 18?

B Yes, mostly between 14 and 18. Over 18 there are some, but by that age, they are more physically and psychologically mature. If they are normal, they start getting out of the gangs. I met one on the streets the other day. He's got a job, and he's going to college. He said, "I know I did wrong before. Now I want to forget about it." Some of the gang members that I used to know told me they are now married. They have children. They have to support their families.

Those who stay in after 20, who are still on the streets, and still connected with the gangs, they are professional.

A How mang gang members would you say are in Chinatown?

B That's hard to say because every group does not a very close organization. They are very flexible. Maybe they have twenty today, but they will only have ten tomorrow.

A Are there leaders?

B There are leaders, but they are not elected. A leader will try to recruit followers and new members. If he is arrested and put in jail, then someone else comes up.

A Since January of this year -- from January to October -- there have been over 30 killings in Chinatown. Do you think there have been more killings than were reported?

B I don't have the accurate figures. If you say there were 30 this year, I'm not surprised. We are getting more and more young people. If there were 30 this year, there may be 40 or 50 next year. In several instances where something happened in New Jersey and Long Island, I knew about them, but they were not reported either in the American newspapers or the Chinese newspapers.

A How many of these killings have resulted in arrests or convictions?

B Very, very few. Only the fellow who stabbed Mr. M.B. Lee (former chairman of the CCBA or the unofficial mayor of Chinatown) was arrested.

A Any others?

B In most of the cases, the 5th Precinct had suspects, but we don't know whether the people arrested were the real criminals or not.

A They were only suspects?

B Well, only the courts can convict.

A And there have been no convictions?

B There have been several, but the one I know about is a Black Eagle member who shot a Ghost Shadow two years ago. He was sentenced to 20 years.

A That was two years ago. This year, has anyone been arrested or convicted?

B Sorry, I don't have the accurate information. Why don't you check with the 5th Precinct?

A The police say the Chinatown residents won't cooperate. They won't come forward as witnesses, and they won't make complaints. Is this a legitimate complaint on their part?

B There are two sides to the story. Naturally the police would say that, but the people are afraid. If the youth gets arrested and is released by the court, he will try to get revenge. Second, the Chinese can't express themselves very well in English. They don't know how to tell the story. Third, you know the Chinese tradition. The Chinese people do not like to get involved in court cases -- including me.

A Is it possible for the police to solve cases without asking the Chinese to appear as witnesses?

B Yes. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, I believe 85 percent of the cases are solved, but at the 5th Precinct, I don't think they have enough manpower.

A How many policemen do you think are out on the streets in Chinatown on an average day?

B That I don't know. The 5th Precinct has about 330 policemen. Except for those who work in the office filing their reports, at least 90 percent should be out on the streets on patrol duty. But you and I know that the police have other jobs to do besides walking the streets of Chinatown. So if some people complain that the police don't care about Chinatown, that is not fair.

A Do you think the 5th Precinct reacted angrily to the mass demonstrations against them last year by not making as many arrests or by not enforcing the law?

B I don't believe so. Perhaps one or two days afterwards, they may have had an emotional reaction. But they are professionals. They have a job to do. They will not stop their duty because of a demonstration.

A Are relations between the police and Chinatown residents still strained?

B Relations between the police and Chinatown was good and is getting better. You know why? Ever since the Chinatown Project in the 5th Precinct was set up, they have eight Chinese-speaking people there to help people in the community.

A Is the Chinatown Auxiliary Police unit still in existence?

B Yes, I believe it still has about 30 members. Three nights a week they help patrol the streets.

A What do they do? Are they effective?

B Not too much because they don't have the power to arrest anyone. They can't carry a gun. They wear a police uniform. They ride in a patrol car. They walk the streets. When they see something wrong, they use a walkie-talkie to report to headquarters.

A What other kinds of crime take place in Chinatown besides gang activities?

B There are a lot of burglaries and car thefts.

A These are not committed by the youths?

B That I don't know. Things get stolen from cars parked in the streets. Usually these cars are parked on the outskirts of Chinatown.

A You mean few people have been caught at these crimes? Were the perpetrators Chinese?

B I think these burglaries were committed by non-Chinese.

A Do you think the gang phenomenon is unique to Chinese youths only in this country?

B I heard that some were already involved with gangs in Hong Kong.

A Do you have any information about the Hong Kong gangs? Are there any connections between those in Hong Kong and those in New York?

B I don't know.

A Are drugs coming on the Chinatown scene?

B Drugs are not peddled on the streets of Chinatown. Chinese youths are not into the taking of drugs.

A What is your opinion? What can be done about the gangs?

B The problem is too complex. Everyone should cooperate and try to take some action, but I don't see that happening.

THE POLICE

NEIL MAURIELLO AND PHILIP AGOSTA

The Fifth Precinct takes in the main Chinatown area. To get the perspective of the police on the gang problem, an interview was taped with Detectives Neil Mauriello (B) and Philip Agosta (C). Det. Mauriello has been at this post for eleven years and Det. Agosta for fifteen years.

A Detectives Mauriello and Agosta, what are your specific duties?

B Phil and I compose a two-man team which is an auxiliary to the Fifth Precinct Investigating Team.

A In other words, you just investigate crimes committed by Chinese?

B More directly, we investigate crimes committed by the Chinese youth gangs that operate within the city of New York.

A To what extent is crime in Chinatown committed by youths and to what extent is it committed by older people?

B There are problems here, in a sense, because a lot of the crime in Chinatown goes unreported.

C Do you mean, how do statistics pile up for Chinese youths as opposed to older Chinese?

A That's right.

C Virtually very little crime reported to us is perpetrated by older Chinese.

A So then your problem now is almost exclusively with youths?

C As related to Chinese, yes. I would say eighty percent or better.

B I think a distinction has to be made when we talk about youths and youth problems. There are dirtier roles involved in the

youth problem. There are people who have been involved in youth gangs for ten years. They were twenty, now they're thirty and they're still involved. So it is difficult to differentiate between an adult and a child in this particular case when you are talking about youth gangs.

A When I refer to youth, I mean youth between the teens and the early twenties.

B It is difficult because when you talk about gang rivals, there are members of a gang that are over that age limit. There are some over thirty. So we tend not to think in age groups. We tend to think in terms of the particular organization of the gang.

A Outside of organized gangs, do you have much of a crime problem or a misdemeanor problem?

B No.

A You do not have other types of concerns? In other words, are most of the offenses committed in Chinatown done by gang members?

B Yes. You've got to realize that we are not talking about gambling. Although it is a crime, it is not investigated by us. This is investigated by the Public Morals District. It is not a violent type of crime. There are no "victims" if you want to put that in quotes because the victim is the loser, of course. But we see that the Chinese gangs have infiltrated the gambling operations and from there, crimes occur.

A What kind of activities are these gang members into?

C Extortion, robbery, and just the plain old pay-off protection scheme.

A Which is the most acute?

B,C Extortion.

B It is just not limited to Chinatown. When we talk about Chinatown, let's just talk about the inner Chinatown area--Canal Street, East Broadway, Baxter Street. If you consider that as Chinatown, we've got an extortion problem all over the city, it appears.

A Then this is not a peculiar situation to Chinatown?

B No, we've had experience working strictly with the gangs for about three years now and we've seen it grow to the outer

boroughs. We've seen it go to midtown Manhattan, upper Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. In Staten Island we haven't seen any great shakes yet. In the Bronx and Yonkers, if there's a Chinese restaurant there, there will have been a couple of robberies, but not much.

A What I referred to was whether extortion is typical of other areas and neighborhoods among the whites, blacks, Puerto Ricans and others.

B Not to our knowledge, but then again we don't handle this.

C We wouldn't be qualified to answer that.

A In other words, you have no statistics on comparisions between what types of crimes are occurring in the various precincts?

C I would venture to say that very few extortions, per se, are reported on a large scale basis in any of the boroughs excluding perhaps with youth gangs. In other words, I don't think it is on as large a scale as it is here in Chinatown, comparison-wise.

B What's interesting is this point of view. There are youth gangs all over the city of New York. We feel after doing a little research on the other gangs that Chinese youth gangs do not seem to be interested in ego trips, not interested in being the boss of their block. They are more interested in making money. It is more of, and don't take it for gospel with the police department, an organized crime problem than a youth gang problem. They don't wear jackets; they're not readily visible. We cannot assume that one particular person is a member of one particular gang. Yet if you go to upper Manhattan or South Bronx, they wear different uniforms. I say uniforms because it is just about that--jackets with their names on it. And you know who they are. That is an important distinction between Chinese youth gangs and youth gangs of other ethnic groups.

A I have just finished talking to a social worker and he said to me that actually these gang members come from families that are not poor. They are not rich, but they are not poor. They are not really in desperate need of the money. Would you agree to this?

C I don't know. That is a hard question for us to answer as police officers, but we have found that the boys that are involved in youth gang activities have, by and large, both parents working. If that is any indicator as to being comfortable as opposed to being poor, I don't know.

B Can we presume that the percentage of the Chinese population on welfare or poor as you say, is lower than that of other populations?

A Yes.

B You can. I am of the belief that the parents of the kinds who belong to the gangs work. You have got to make different degrees of economy. What is poor? Five thousand dollars or ten thousand dollars a year? All I know is that most of them work.

C We find that most of them live in tenement areas, not in luxury apartment houses by any means, but in multiple dwelling type of buildings, which I think are not synonymous with middle class living but are more synonymous with bordering on the low class earning groups.

B These kids would not be starving if they were living home.

A Are they primarily living within or around the vicinity of Chinatown, or do they live in all boroughs of the city?

B It is probable that the majority live in Manhattan in the Chinatown area. But we do have people that live in Queens. It seems that the older members of the gangs, the ones that have been around a while and whose families have been in this country a longer period of time, move out to the suburbs of Queens and Brooklyn. Brooklyn has become a Chinatown No. 2. There has been a lot of Chinese movement into the Parade Grounds area. In Queens--Flushing and Elmhurst are loaded with Chinese people, and these families have been here the longest.

C Jackson Heights, too.

A How long does it generally take from the time they immigrate to this country for them to become a member of a gang?

B I don't think there is any set minimum or maximum. We've seen young men who were born here, though there aren't that many who join the gang. Then we see some that are new immigrants who have little mastery of the English and within a year are in. It goes both ways. They could have been here a long time or just a year.

A But the native-borns are isolated cases, you say.

B Yes.

A Have you ever talked with the parents of any of these gang members?

C Many times.

A Could you tell me your impressions of the parents.

C Of course, we have to allow much for the language barrier but in most cases they were naturally concerned about their child's involvement in youth gang activity, even if we were the first ones to bring it to their attention. But I also found that by and large, they had very little control over their children in that they would take them from the station house, let's say on a personal recognizance type of release, and the next day that same boy will be back here with the same gang hanging out on the same corner again! It seems to be some sort of problem with the parents' controlling that child. The reasons for it are many and varied but it seems to be a lack of control.

B I think the chief reason is that both parents are working. The head of the household, the father, goes and works six days in a restaurant outside of New York, yet he lives here in New York. The mother will work in a factory twelve or fourteen hours a day. There is a truancy problem in New York and that period of time where the child is home, if he doesn't want to go to school, he doesn't go. So where does he go? He hangs out.

A Do you think that schools are recruiting grounds for gang members?

C Yes. Do you mean the schools or the fact of not being able to exist in the school system?

A Let's say both. First take whether schools by the very fact of going into the schools that these schools serve as a recruiting ground for gang members.

B More is done outside of it. Let's say we have Junior High School 65 which is predominantly Chinese now. We've had instances where they will take boys going into school or coming out of school and attempt to recruit them into the gang. As far as inside or directly, I don't think it exists.

C I would say no. Inside the school, as far as the ability of the teachers to handle the children in school is concerned, I think they are doing the best job they can. What happens is the rejection from the school scene, not being able to cope at the sixth grade or eighth grade level due to perhaps the language barrier and that child is rejected only for not keeping up with his counterparts or his peers then, indirectly yes. But I think that the schools are not to be blamed per se.

A Have you visited the schools?

C Yes.

A Have you noticed what causes the young people to be turned off from school?

B Physically we see a young man who cannot speak the language. I know the schools have made some great inroads into having Chinese-speaking teachers and so forth. I don't think it has been 100 percent effective. I think they still have some problems. It's also interesting to note a main factor when you talk about recruiting: Normally when we see a new face on the street, we'll talk to him and we'll naturally find out who he is and he will usually indicate to us that he has a friend in the gang. This seems to be the road into the gang--by having a friend already in it. Now whether that friend was made with a new member that just came from Hong Kong or he already knew someone here in New York, I think you've got a combination of both. We don't see too much forced recruitment anymore. I had several cases earlier in the year or last year and I think we solved that problem by making some arrests and we hope the problem of forced recruitment was solved.

A Who did you arrest? The people who were trying to recruit others into the gang--you arrested those members?

B Yes, but of course as far as police work goes, we need a complainant to do anything. Without the body saying that something was done to him, we have no crime. Fortunately, these people came in and told us about it, and we investigated and identified the people. We arrested them and they went to trial.

A Can you in some way give me a composite picture of a gang member? Are there typical members? Are there certain circumstances that are typical of gangs? Let's say, are they generally immigrants?

B Yes.

A What age range?

B I'd say the new ones--thirteen or fourteen through twenty.

A Primarily at the lower range?

C Around sixteen or seventeen.

B Not that many between thirteen and sixteen, only some. More between sixteen and eighteen and then a few between eighteen and twenty.

A Would you say that these members are not too intelligent?

C I could not say that. No, not really.

A Would you say they are very intelligent, and they think this is an easy way to get money, or is it because they cannot keep up with the school work that they join gangs?

C I think it is a combination of a lot of things. It is common knowledge that one of the causes is, of course, that they have this language barrier in school. Another factor that has to be considered, as Neil mentioned, is a friend introducing to a new immigrant perhaps an easy way of picking up a few bucks. You present a sixteen or seventeen year old with a chance to make himself say, for argument sake, $20 to $25 a week for hanging around. There is an opportunity to make an easy buck. I think another factor that cannot be overlooked is the fact that a new immigrant coming here at say sixteen who observes both of his parents working long hours every day just to survive here perhaps turns him off to the working scene as opposed to the easy buck scene.

B There is a lack of employment. These kids can make enough money in a gang so that a job earning the minimal amount of money is not important to them.

A Do you think that these gang members have some sort of charisma? You say they don't go for the ego trip?

B I don't want to blanket state that ego is not there. There is some, but it is nothing compared to the other gangs. They'll look up to a particular leader and think he is a great guy and back him up, if you want to put it in those words.

A Has your youth services done any surveys or research in psychological characteristics of gang members?

B No, we don't even talk to them. We have no survey on youth services of Asians.

A I would like to know whether there are certain background problems. Are these kids in some way emotionally disturbed? Do you detect that at all?

B We are not doctors. If a guy kills somebody, is he emotionally disturbed? I don't know whether he was filled with hatred or whether it is a factor of he shot me and I am going to shoot him. I don't think that we've actually run into anyone that we can detect, not being experts in any type of psychological problems, who may be so. They don't appear to be so to me.

A Do you find yourself up against a stone wall in dealing with a lot of problems because you are non-Chinese or you don't speak the language?

C We find that most of the kids can communicate with us in English. Of course, the ones that are newly arrived have a limited command of the language, but I don't think it has ever been a real problem. We have gotten a lot of help from other people in interpreting for us and getting our message to them as well as their message to us.

B Once again, we investigate to arrest people. We've had a lot of success in the last two or three years of assualt cases where one gang will shoot at another gang. We will have the members of the gang who were shot at in to sign complaints. Now, from our point of view, as soon as we make an arrest, it goes to the other part of the system and then you get into more problems.

A What is the procedure?

B We make an arrest and we go to the complaint room in the criminal court and tell the facts to the District Attorney. A complaint is drawn up. They are arraigned in front of the judge, and from there the process is normally slow. If it is a very good case, we've found that they go immediately to the grand juries and indict. If the cases are a little fuzzy, it will take more time to get more evidence. We find often that deals are made before the case will go to trial. Let's say it takes a year for an important case to go to trial. Often we will find that a deal has been made in that year and the gangs that got shot at will drop the charges with some kind of consideration for themselves. They do this solely among themselves, and we end up a year later without a case. Now whether it be just the disappearance of a witness until the case is thrown out or they come into court and say, "I don't remember," or "That's not the man," it could be either one.

A Are the offenses committed by these gang members mainly against other gang members?

B The violent crimes like assaults are committed against each of the opposing gangs. Now in extortion, it is against legitimate business people sometimes and very often they . . .

A They are not Chinese?

B They are Chinese but possibly involved in some other criminal activity.

C Most of the victims of the Chinese youth gang crime are Chinese.

B There are sporadic cases where they are not.

A You said they are against other people who are also involved in crimes? Did I understand you correctly?

C That is too broad a statement.

B Here's the way it goes. I don't think it is any different from any other ethnic group. If you are an extortionist no matter where you are in the world, who are the easiest targets in extortion? Somebody who has something to worry about. If you are a drug dealer and I know you are a drug dealer, I go to you and I want to share in your profits so I'm going to expose you. This is the type of crime that goes unreported. And you pay!

A Now these illegal activities you identified as gambling and, you say, drugs?

B Gambling, drugs. Maybe you are an illegal alien and you don't want to leave the country.

C Also, I have to add that you could be a person such as a store owner, a perfectly legitimate person not doing anything wrong, abiding by the laws of our country, and so on. I could present myself as a member of the XYZ gang and tell you point blank that I desire $50 a week or I'll break your windows.

A Protection money?

C Yes, it is a form of extortion.

B They are becoming more subtle though. They will go into a location now and they won't spell out a crime. They will say that one of their friends is in trouble or in jail and they need a donation. This is occurring more and more frequently. It is very difficult to prosecute on this because if the people pay them, there were no overt statements made. The people we know are frightened as hell, and this is what the Chinese gangs are working on. They know that they can be terrifying. The press hasn't helped at all--the English speaking press. I don't know about the Chinese press, but the English speaking press exposes these things and the people see it and for some reason, maybe you would be more adept at explaining why the Chinese people are very frightened, more so than any other group.

A Then what is being done for the victim?

C They have a guarantee, at least on my part and Neil's part that we will do everything in our power to apprehend these people. There is never any case that we receive that we don't expend all

our energies towards its successful completion. I think that by and large, the people who have come to us as complainants will attest to this and verify this. More than this, Neil and I as policemen at the low end of the pole, cannot do more than that--other than using our expertise on solving the crimes.

A Is the community helpless at this point?

C Helpless in what sense?

A Helpless in that they cannot handle the situation in being victimized, and that they are so afraid that they don't know what to do and they are afraid to come to you.

B It appears that they don't want to recognize the problem. That's more a personal opinion than anything else. They seem to turn their backs on the fact that there is a problem. We've seen them get up in arms at City Hall over an incident where a policeman may have hit someone. Yet, when it comes to youth gang problems, they don't rise up and say, "Let's end it."

A From your viewpoint, do you think that they could do something if they wanted to?

C I think that strength comes from unity. If they all vowed to pull together as a group of, say, all the businessmen in Chinatown and said, "The heck with this. We've had enough of this business. We, as a group, are going to ban and stick together." Then possibly they would be able to do something.

B But I think you are talking about a very fractionalized community because everyone has their own special interest. Each organization, seems aimed at their own interests more than the betterment of of the community.

A Then they are in a position to deal with the situation now?

C Do you mean on a one-to-one basis?

A No, as a community.

C I think a community can deal with almost any kind of crime situation if they really put their minds to it. I don't think crime runs rampant through the city without it being checked at some point. In other words, if there was a continuous occurrence of rapes in any given area, whether it be white, black, yellow, or whatever, I think that as soon as the community gets up in arms and really screams, not that it has to be that way, but when they do, you can be sure that that's where the action

is going to go. It's like the noisy wheel getting the grease. But they haven't squeaked! We're willing and we have always been willing, and Barry Eng (the only Chinese policeman of the force) or any of the people in the Chinatown project will attest to this, we will do everything in our power to assist the Chinese complainants if only they would come forward to us.

A Do you think that any of the Chinese organizations are the power behind the gangs?

C Not an exclusive power, but I don't think there is any doubt (we'd all be lying if we didn't say it) that the Hip Sing and On Leong have a lot to do with the gangs as they exist today.

A And if they did not support them they would not exist?

C That is a lowly question. We can give you our opinion but if you ask us to prove it to you, you know what we would run up against.

A Your opinion is yes?

C My opinion, and I am sure Neil agrees, is that the two major tongs or associations in Chinatown have something to do with the perpetuation of the youth gangs.

A What approximately is the total number of gang members?

C We have five major gangs now: The Ghost Shadows, the Flying Dragons, the Black Eagles, the White Eagles and the Wah Ching.

B You've got to remember that everyone is not a hard core active member of the gang. I would say hard core--you've got 150 people. A total of about 300. Now that is a very, very small number when you think about all the youths in New York City, but it happens to be that small number that creates a lot of problems for everyone.

A Would you say that gang members act in concert? Do they ever act individually in any perpetration of a misdemeanor or a crime?

C Of course, excluding the spontaneous kind of assault, where maybe a gang member is at a dance and gets into a fist fight with another Chinese or a non-Chinese for that matter, excluding that type of spontaneous act, I think it is frowned upon if a member of say the Black Eagles, for instance, would go out and start doing extortions on his own without the leaders of the gang knowing about it. It may occur but it is not something that would be looked upon favorably by the leaders of that particular gang.

What we have also found recently is that there are people that are putting themselves up as members of a gang and extorting money from Chinese merchants. They say, "We're members of the Ghost Shadows. Our brother is in jail and we need $1,000." And the money would be paid thinking that they were in fact members of the Ghost Shadows, but they weren't.

A But you do not find single members that will go off and say, steal something from the store or pickpocket or do things like that individually?

B Well, we've had a few stickups, meaning robbery of a restaurant or a location, but there are no pickpockets that I know of.

A Do you think the police has the support of the community?

B You've got to narrow that down a bit. That's a terrible question! Support against the youth gangs? We already told you, no. Support against gambling? No. Support for street lights? We get them street lights.

A You deal with the problems every day and you wish something could be done. What recommendations do you have?

C What I would wish for would be that all complainants would come forward and state their case as to what happened. That is the utopia of all police work. If all complainants come forward and hopefully identify all the people involved, then, of course, the police could deal with the crime on a more direct basis. But I realize it's a utopia because I honestly don't think that will ever take place.

A You've had some historical perspective. You have been here eleven years and you, fifteen years. How has the scene changed from eleven to fifteen years ago up till now?

B Back ten years ago the gangs were not as violent as they are now.

A There were gangs?

B It was the early development of the gangs at that time about 1966. We saw some, but at that time Junior High School 65 was not completely Chinese. In fact, they were only a small percentage, and we saw some activities where other ethnic groups were picking on the Chinese and we more or less believed that that was when they began. They got together to stop the violence that was occurring on them from the other groups. This was the beginning of the gangs. Then it became just the volume, the number

of these people. Remember, ten or eleven years ago you didn't see that many Chinese people in the streets of Chinatown. Today, if you walk through Chinatown, it is predominantly Chinese. It is an immense number and I am sure your statistics bear it out about the number of people who are coming here from Asia.

C Again, as Neil mentioned before, in numbers you are not talking about a lot of people. You are talking about youth gangs of about 400 people as opposed to a community of maybe 70,000 or 80,000 people. It is only a minute percentage. But as opposed to ten or twenty years ago, the percentage increase to 400 today is astronomical and it has increased as years have gone by. I think the last few years have seen the stabilization to some extent of the numbers. In other words, 300 to 400 is a number that has been constant for the last couple of years.

A How about the activities? Has it gone down? Has it declined say within the last three years?

B We think that the extortion has gone up. Once again, we are not making that many extortion cases basically because the complainants are not coming in. But we get a lot of feedback and we find that there is a lot of extortion going on throughout the city of New York--basically in Chinese establishments, stores, or restaurants. Now the murders and assaults, we have a steady flow since 1969. They are going to happen. We know they are going to happen. They may possibly be more violent because of the availability of handguns, because they have money, and because there are apparently avenues to buy these things. They are a little more reckless. There has been more incidents of shootings where people have been hit, like the recent one where five people were hit. We didn't have too much of that years ago. We had one-on-ones where one person was hurt, but now you're getting right into an area that is highly populated, at a time that it is highly populated, and you are getting shootings. They are getting a little more reckless.

A So you say that ten years ago there were gangs but hardly any activity. Today it is getting worse. Do you see it getting better?

C I don't see it getting better because it seems to me that though some gang kids have "seen the light" and are now out of the gangs and are living a normal life, new recruits are coming in to take their place.

A Gangs have come and gangs have gone. There are a lot of gangs that are in existence today which were not the gangs that were there ten years ago.

B Maybe not by name. The names have changed. You've always had White and Black Eagles, you've always had what you call the Ghost Shadows today but they were called Quon Ying back then. The nucleus, the hard core, is basically the same people. That is why I said to you before that some of them are thirty years old. You've got people involved in the White Eagles for ten years. They are the ones always in control of Chinatown. Now recently up to 1974, they were removed and the Ghost Shadows came into control. But those Ghost Shadows who were Quon Ying existed ten years ago also.

A What are the other gangs?

B You've got the Flying Dragons who have been here for quite a long time and they used to be affiliated with the White and Black Eagles. You've got some elements of California people here who are known as the Wah Ching.

A Is the Wah Ching becoming more important or is it on the fringes?

B It is on the fringes. I don't think that they are as important as the press is playing them up to be. The press has sometimes been our worst enemy. They blow things out of proportion for sensationalism purposes to sell newspapers. Now I am not talking only about the English newspapers. The Chinese newspapers, too. They print rumors. The worst thing that could possibly happen is when they get wind of something that is a lot of B.S. and they print it!

A In other words, you don't think the problem is as serious as the newspapers make it to be--that it is sensationalized. Or do you think it is serious?

C Oh, I think it is serious. Of course, if one policeman gets caught in a graft situation, it is sensationalized. It is front page news and will run for three days. No one is going to say that that policeman is one of 26,000. That is an isolated case. What I think Neil was trying to say is that as soon as a youth gang instance happens, there are certain reporters that are making a living from this type of reporting and they're . . .

A Aside from that. In your own assessment, is it a serious problem?

B,C Yes.

B It is a serious problem because the community is not approaching it as a serious problem. You have got to remember that police departments all over the world are only working if the people are

interested in stopping something. We are the arm of the people.

C I think it is a serious problem when a legitimate businessman has to pay monies to people so that he can go on thriving in the business world. To me, that is a serious problem.

A And it is fairly widespread?

C I think it is.

A Are there any political connections with the gangs?

B I don't think so.

A Thank you very much.

TABLE 1

Arrests of Chinese Youth Under 21 in
New York City's Fifth Police Precinct, 1955-1976

Date	No.	Date	No.	Date	No.
1955	1	1962	7	1969	59
1956	1	1963	8	1970	58
1957	1	1964	3	1971	47
1958	3	1965	9	1972	58
1959	1	1966	8	1973	112
1960	0	1967	21	1974	160*
1961	2	1968	13	1975	233
				1976	201**

SOURCE: New York City Fifth Precinct

NOTES: *Approximate
**Nine months only

TABLE 2

CHINESE ARRESTED IN U.S. CITIES, OVER AND UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE
1971 - 1976

OFFENSE CHARGED*	1971		1972		1973		1974		1975		1976	
	18+	18-	18+	18-	18+	18-	18+	18-	18+	18-	18+	18-
Criminal Homicide	5	2	12	4	6	10	17	5	16	2	5	0
Forcible Rape	1	1	13	0	4	1	5	1	5	0	6	0
Robbery	13	8	68	3	29	25	52	35	32	27	28	4
Aggravated Assault	41	14	134	47	43	59	74	28	94	24	52	9
Burglary	59	64	93	67	37	65	53	80	84	90	25	40
Larceny, Theft	346	256	480	298	389	282	635	413	688	356	493	218
Motor Vehicle Theft	107	27	25	35	11	36	37	38	18	40	12	18
Other Assaults	58	13	172	42	54	41	110	35	102	51	80	23
Arson	12	3	5	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Rec/Buy. Stolen Property	18	15	108	21	17	8	32	8	33	29	16	7
Vandalism	14	20	35	43	12	26	26	39	28	28	24	17
Weapons, Carry or Possess.	36	17	79	18	30	23	52	16	50	21	48	2
Narcotic Drug Laws	131	37	236	37	151	34	189	28	169	35	97	26
Gambling	175	7	181	1	105	0	72	2	71	1	137	3
Offenses Against Family/Children	6	0	4	0	4	0	13	2	6	1	2	0
Liquor Laws & Drunkenness	317	18	386	17	435	14	440	11	580	31	220	27
Disorderly Conduct	147	50	81	35	88	23	157	33	139	26	124	21
Vagrancy	16	1	11	3	94	1	36	3	30	6	15	2
Curfew, Loitering	60	46	15	25	4	33	4	25	5	30	0	31
Runaways	0	70	0	73	0	51	0	50	0	52	0	42

SOURCE: Federal Bureau of Investigation. Crime in the United States: Uniform Crime Reports (Washington D.C., 1971-197)

*Offense Charged in descending order of seriousness. Those offenses omitted are insignificant for the Chinese.

NOTE: Obviously the figures given in this table are an undercount. The reason given is that not all cities reported arrests for the Chinese to the FBI.

TABLE 3

Chinese Male Immigrants Admitted to the United States, Age 0-19, 1971-76

Age	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
0	38	60	65	76	72	82
1	49	74	85	104	107	111
2	70	89	89	116	106	110
3	78	101	84	111	133	154
4	86	111	117	127	120	152
5	81	103	126	127	121	141
6	108	104	98	116	144	136
7	93	131	117	131	136	151
8	106	103	133	131	127	160
9	84	118	121	146	129	163
10	107	104	127	143	137	158
11	90	99	124	147	177	158
12	100	126	117	113	162	172
13	99	127	103	145	164	171
14	90	104	129	134	137	169
15	81	104	123	130	105	115
16	78	78	87	92	103	78
17	54	87	77	85	87	77
18	69	72	65	80	103	89
19	71	93	80	76	100	94
Total	1,632	1,988	2,067	2,330	2,470	2,641

SOURCE: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Special Tabulation (Washington, D.C.)

COMMENT: Each year, less than one thousand Chinese teenagers enter the country.

CONCLUSION

At the moment, everyone you talk to in Chinatown feels impotent and helpless about the gang situation. The people will express their fears. They are indignant. They will voice their concerns, but if actually confronted with gang extortion or muggings, they submit. They hand over the money without reporting it to the police or making a fuss. They hurry into Chinatown to do their errands and as quickly depart. They avoid the places where gangs hang out for fear of being caught in the crossfire. They escort their children to school and forbid them to go out on the streets to play. When they read of another killing in Chinatown, they become a little more anxious and more fearful. Fear is now their constant companion.

Every so often, a reporter from the newspaper or media will come down and ask, "What's the answer? What's the solution?" There is no simple instant panacea. It is hoped that the interviews and other data presented in this monograph provide some inkling into the gang problem. The causes are not just one or a few. They are many, and most are linked. However, passive acceptance can only make matters worse. The problem must be tackled from all fronts at once. The following list of suggestions were offered to some of the interviewees as trial balloons for their comments. The suggestions are now listed and categorized. The responsibility for this cancerous phenomena in our community is not solely that of the youths involved. The judicial system, the police, the schools, the government and community, the adult criminal minds, the parents and the peers all bear some responsibility. A single approach cannot do any good. The problem must be tackled from every side at the same time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Judicial System

1. Tighten laws on juvenile delinquency.

2. Clamp down on offenders by handing out harsher sentences.

3. Deport serious and repeat offenders.

4. Enable witnesses to give testimony without subjecting them to retaliation and personal danger.

5. Make it a serious felony for the gambling establishments if minors under eighteen are found in such places.

The Police

1. Assign more policemen to Chinatown streets.

2. Make use of Chinese undercover agents.

3. Hire more Chinese-speaking policemen (presently only one on the entire New York City police force).

4. Utilize more effectively the Chinatown auxilary police force now in existence.

5. Restore the confidence of the Chinese in the police force. Relations between the community and the police have not been cordial. After the mass protest march against police brutality in 1975, the police seem to exhibit reluctance to help the community.

6. Give greater priority to the serious gang problems in Chinatown. Presently, it seems that Chinatown concerns are way down at the bottom of the list. Most Chinatown residents feel that the police simply are not doing enough. They see the protection of their lives and property as a duty of the police.

7. Provide tangible assurance that witnesses to crime who agree to testify will not be the target of retaliation. The police insist that the community will not cooperate with them, but the police can, if they wanted to, crack down on the gangs without asking the community people to appear in court as witnesses.

8. Set up decoys.

9. Get at the source of the problem by dealing with the tongs and associations or the ones behind the gangs.

The Government and Community

1. Recognize the gang problem rather than try to cover it up

2. Mobilize Chinatown residents to meet this danger collectively.

3. Ask for government funds to provide more recreational facilities or preventive programs such as Project Reach.

4. Facilitate use of cultural and recreational facilities outside of Chinatown.

5. Try to ease the housing congestion by getting people to move to adjacent areas or improve housing quality.

6. Enforce working hour limits in the garment factories, so that mothers can look after their children.

7. Help the fathers get better and more diversified jobs so that they can spend more time with their families.

8. Help the teenagers get part-time jobs.

9. Provide legal gambling opportunities operated by the community such as "Las Vegas nights," as substitutes for private gambling establishments.

Schools

1. Provide better English language programs.

2. Provide bilingual classes for recent immigrant children to enable them to keep up with school work.

3. Raise consciousness of teachers and schools on bicultural conflicts.

4. Provide extracurricula activities, especially sports for the teenage boys.

5. Set up tutoring system for students who need extra help with schoolwork.

6. Supervise the playgrounds, halls, and lunchrooms more so that the gangs cannot intimidate the children.

7. Teach children how to deal with gang extortions, beatings, and recruitments in the school. Presently there are fire drills and

safety patrol rules to help them in case of fire or traffic dangers, but nothing is said about how to deal with gangs who are more of a threat than fire or traffic hazards.

Tongs and Associations

1. The corruption and use of young boys to do the dirty work of these organizations is indefensible. Sooner or later, the wrath of the community will descend upon their heads. The tongs cannot continue to operate in a community whose economic base is reduced by less business, leading to business failures and loss of jobs. It is not in the tong's self-interest to support the gangs.

Parents

1. Spend more time with your children.
2. Talk to your children about their anxieties and problems.
3. Know where your children are and know what they are doing.
4. If necessary, move away from Chinatown so that the child is removed from the gang's influence.
5. If you can't control the teenager, seek help from the school, the teachers, or social workers.
6. Develop in your children the moral values that will stand them in good stead.

Peers

1. Be careful in choosing your friends.
2. There is security in numbers. Form a small, intimate group to help one another.
3. Be a buddy.
4. Date in groups or socialize in groups.
5. Organize sports activities or clubs for recreation.
6. Join organizations like Chinatown Life, the Boy Scouts, or church-sponsored groups.

The Individual

1. Do not be tempted. The easy money from illegal activities may not be such easy money in the long run.

2. If you need help with language, with problems, with gang threats, seek the advice of your parents, a teacher, or social worker.

3. Engage in competitive sports to use up excess teenage energy.

4. Make every effort to finish your schooling. Truancy is usually the first step toward dropping behind and dropping out. If you care about your future, care enough to finish school.

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